United Nations E/2004/SR.33

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

2 September 2004

Original: English

Substantive session of 2004
Operational activities segment

Provisional summary record of the 33rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 12 July 2004, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Neil (Vice-President) ..... (Jamaica)

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Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation

(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (*continued*)

(b) Reports of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Populations Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme

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04-42011 (E)

In the absence of Ms. Risa (Finland), Mr. Neil (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation

(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (*continued*)

Draft resolution E/2004/L.15 (Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system)

1. **The President** announced that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications and said that, if there were no objections, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt it.

2. *Draft resolution E/2004/L.15 was adopted.*

3. **The President** invited the Council to take note of the report of the Secretary-General on comprehensive statistical data on operational activities for development for 2002 (A/59/84-E/2004/57).

4. *It was so decided.*

(b) Report of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/ United Nations Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme

5. **The President** invited the Council to take note of the following documents: report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund on its work during 2003 (E/2003/35); annual report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund to the Economic and Social Council (E/2004/3); annual report of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme to the Economic and Social Council (E/2004/4); annual report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund to the Economic and Social Council (E/2004/5); annual report of the Executive Director of the World Food Programme for 2003 (E/2004/14); report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its first regular session of 2004 (E/2004/34) (Part I) and Add.1); report of the Executive Board of the World Food Programme on its first, second and third regular sessions and its annual session of 2003 (E/2004/36); report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund on its first regular session of 2004 (DP/2004/14); decisions adopted by the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Populations Fund at its annual session of 2004 (DP/2004/33); extracts from the report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund containing decisions adopted by the Board at its annual session of 2004 (E/2004/L.11).

6. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.

United Nations E/2004/SR.34

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

8 September 2004

Original: English

Substantive session for 2004
Humanitarian affairs segments

Provisional summary record of the 34th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 12 July 2004, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Penjo (Vice-President) ..... (Bhutan)

Contents

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

04-42014 (E)

In the absence of Ms. Rasi, Mr. Penjo, Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (A/59/86-E/2004/69 and A/59/93-E/2004/74)

1. **The President**, after declaring open the humanitarian affairs segment, said that it was the responsibility of Member States to ensure the well-being and protection of their citizens, and the Council's humanitarian affairs segment was an important component of that endeavour. It provided a unique opportunity to reflect on the past year, share ideas and experiences, and identify collective challenges and practical measures to address them. It was therefore essential to reach agreement on a resolution that would guide and support the humanitarian effort during the coming year.

2. **Mr. Egeland** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator), introducing the Secretary-General's report entitled "Strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" (E/2004/74), noted that it described a year of great changes in the field of humanitarian affairs. In some parts of the world, important strides had been made in addressing the root causes of disasters, and critical progress had been achieved in identifying and prioritizing needs. In others, however, such gains were eclipsed by some of the most dramatic and disturbing developments of modern times: severe floods in Bangladesh and India; the earthquake in Bam, Iran, and the violent displacement of people in Darfur, Sudan. Moreover, the last year would perhaps be remembered most because of attacks against humanitarian colleagues and relief operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan and, in August 2003, Iraq.

3. New actors and methods were forcing a review of current practices; new threats to security were testing the resolve of the humanitarian community, whose impartial role was becoming less clear-cut. Many humanitarian partners were worried as the increased involvement of commercial organizations and military forces in relief activities caused working methods and public perceptions to change. The humanitarian community must therefore remain true to the spirit of General Assembly resolution 46/182 by effectively communicating its impartiality and reinforcing the guiding principles that underpinned its work.

4. Undoubtedly, great strides had been made in improving the models, methods and tools of response. However, the "logistical revolution" demanded a corresponding moral, ethical and political revolution in and among Member States and armed groups. Without the necessary access, security and financial resources, state-of-the-art technology could not be used to full advantage. Further, while it was important to continue to support international response mechanisms, more needed to be done to make use of the capacity that already existed in disaster-prone countries. International response tools were inadequate without corresponding local and national capacity-building. The earthquake in Bam showed the importance of local response: before the arrival of the international search and rescue teams in the first critical hours after the earthquake, the Iranian Red Crescent Society had already mobilized eight local relief teams and nearly all the immediate rescue and evacuation was conducted by local and regional actors.

5. The resources of the humanitarian community had always been limited in comparison to its needs. He was nevertheless concerned that, while overall requirements were similar to those of 2003, many commitments had not yet been met. Only 29 per cent of the total requirements for current consolidated appeals had been received, as compared to 33 per cent at the same time in 2003. He was particularly appalled by low levels of funding for crises in the Central African Republic and Somalia, where need was greatest.

6. He was also disturbed by the limited participation in humanitarian funding. Many countries with growing economies were currently richer than the traditional donors had been when they had begun contributing substantially to humanitarian assistance, but economic success had not been translated into pledges. More resources could be secured if traditional donors, response partners and humanitarian workers were more open to forging broad regional and international partnerships.

7. Internal displacement remained a major cause for concern. In that connection, he had taken to heart an external evaluation that found inter-agency collaboration to be lacking. Accordingly, he had expanded the current unit into an inter-agency internal

displacement division and charged it with improving collaboration. He continued to be deeply troubled by sexual exploitation in conflict situations, although he was encouraged by measures to increase awareness among humanitarian actors. The United Nations now required adherence to the highest standards of behaviour from its own staff and from personnel provided to peacekeeping operations by Member States.

8. Since the previous year's humanitarian affairs segment, efforts had been made to address the gaps in transition planning and funding. Progress had been made in prioritizing needs and towards the establishment of a peer review process to examine bilateral humanitarian donations. The necessary shift towards addressing the root cause of disasters was gaining momentum.

9. The ongoing review of the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation, 1994, was an opportunity to increase commitment to disaster reduction and to develop a programme of action to support vulnerable communities. To that end, he looked forward to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, to be held in Kobe, Japan, in January 2005.

10. **Mr. Al-Bader** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed concern that the overall requirements for humanitarian assistance remained constant. Natural disasters and environmental emergencies continued to be a threat to the world's poorest people, inflicting heavy human and economic loss. It was therefore essential to develop national preparedness and response capacities in disaster-prone countries, launching effective strategies to address disaster hazards and vulnerabilities and creating regional early warning systems. He stressed the importance of supporting the efforts of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, thereby ensuring that humanitarian assistance would be provided in accordance with humanitarian principles. The Initiative must in turn promote best practice among donors and facilitate humanitarian coordination. To meet those objectives, the Group of 77 and China reaffirmed the importance of developing a framework to provide country teams with a transparent and consistent way to organize information and to enhance the role of agencies in providing emergency assistance in a timely manner.

11. The Group of 77 and China commended the efforts made in countries emerging from conflict by the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, and it welcomed the joint efforts to support country teams in planning and identifying the main elements of the transition strategy.

12. The plight of internally displaced persons remained dire. Humanitarian staff needed the fullest protection from acts of violence and tragic loss of life. To address such issues, the Group of 77 and China underlined the necessity of improved collaboration among humanitarian agencies through continuous development of an enhanced security policy. National response capacity was important: local personnel, properly trained and equipped, offered the most effective means of rapid initial response. Finally, the Group of 77 and China supported the use of the Guidelines for HIV/AIDS interventions in emergency settings established by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on HIV/AIDS in Emergency Settings.

13. **Mr. Berteling** (Observer for the Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey), the stabilization and association process countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), said that coordination must not occur only with, or within, the United Nations. The United Nations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Governments must act together. A small but significant step in that regard would be to include all Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) partners in discussions with United Nations country teams, when appropriate. The European Union welcomed the efforts of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to draw public attention to the situation in Darfur and insisted that the Government of Sudan should grant immediate and unimpeded humanitarian access, that human rights violations should be brought to an end, and that all parties to the conflict should abide by the humanitarian ceasefire agreed in N'Djamena on 8 April 2004.

14. Within the framework of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, donors had committed themselves to improving funding practices. The European Union participated actively in discussions among donors on that subject. Humanitarian funding must be adequate, predictable and timely and should be accompanied by

financing to ensure a smooth transition to reconstruction and development.

15. Acts of sexual violence, exploitation and abuse could constitute a crime against humanity in some circumstances. Rape was increasingly used as a weapon in conflict. Such actions must be tackled, along with sexual abuse by humanitarian workers and members of peacekeeping forces. The European Union welcomed the steps taken within the United Nations system to prevent wrongdoing and called upon the Member States to promote similar standards for their uniformed personnel serving under the United Nations.

16. Improved policies regarding internally displaced persons must translate into better practice. The number of internally displaced persons was a good indicator of the level of humanitarian coordination, as no organization was exclusively responsible for them. The European Union welcomed the leadership shown by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and believed that the collaborative approach to the issue must succeed.

17. Mine action was a prerequisite for the safe delivery of humanitarian aid and long-term development. A coordinated programme should be made part of the overall humanitarian operation, in line with the needs defined in the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), and all actors in that field should be encouraged to coordinate their efforts under the guidance of the United Nations Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

18. The European Union wished to emphasize its support for the work of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) secretariat, for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction to be held in Kobe and for the Conference's planned focus on capacity building, contingency planning, preparedness and ownership because that was the best way to reduce damage from disasters. That was particularly true of the harm caused by climate change, since extreme weather events would become more frequent. Disaster reduction must go beyond disaster response and become part of development planning and local coping strategies. The European Union recognized that the international community was failing to invest enough in disaster preparedness, even though that might be more cost-effective than investing in disaster response. With regard to disaster response, it supported the leading role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) system and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) and said that the European Union disaster response mechanism being established would complement the existing United Nations instruments.

19. The response of the United Nations to new security challenges was extremely important for humanitarian action. The European Union welcomed the Organization's work on enhanced security analysis and measures, but took the view that the emphasis should be on risk management rather than risk avoidance, because risk avoidance would reduce the capacity, and thus credibility, of the United Nations. All Member States that had not yet done so should sign the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. They had the obligation to respect, and ensure respect for, international humanitarian law. The European Union believed that the United Nations and Member States must face the challenge of establishing a safe and secure working environment for humanitarian workers. If they failed, the entire humanitarian system might fail. Member States must actively prevent the roles and mandates of humanitarian and military actors from becoming blurred, as a blurring of roles decreased security for humanitarian workers. The concept of integrated missions brought the risk that United Nations humanitarian action would be seen as part of a broader political agenda. Such missions must therefore be organized in such a way as to prevent the independence, impartiality and neutrality of the humanitarian portion of United Nations operations from being misunderstood.

20. The European Union and its member States had been the largest source of humanitarian funding in the world in 2004 and had included humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law in the future European Union Constitutional Treaty. Humanitarian objectives, policies, practices and funding arrangements would continue to converge, driven by the principles of good humanitarian donorship; the European Union therefore attached importance to the forthcoming conference on that subject, to be held in Ottawa. The European Union would do its utmost to make the World Conference on Disaster Reduction a success by promoting a clear link with the Plan of Implementation of the 2002 World

Summit on Sustainable Development and by promoting operational efforts, including new partnerships.

21. With regard to new security challenges, the European Union pledged to uphold and promote the principle of independent and neutral humanitarian action, both within and outside integrated missions, and to support the Organization's own efforts to respond to such threats. The presence of the United Nations was of paramount importance, especially in crisis environments.

22. **Mr. Kitaoka** (Japan) said that local communities' perception and acceptance of humanitarian activities were changing because of the increasing scale of humanitarian assistance and the growing involvement of military forces in relief activities. In order to be accepted by local communities, humanitarian workers should take on a supporting role, because the members of those communities were the key players. Local communities should have ownership of the process of improving living conditions and make full use of their unique social and cultural heritage from the outset, even in a crisis requiring humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian workers could encourage such ownership by respecting local traditions and culture, and engaging in dialogue. Where local NGOs were present, they should be fully involved in assistance activities. Ownership could also be improved by giving a role to regional organizations, as neighbours, and self-reliance could be promoted by empowering the local population from the earliest stages of humanitarian assistance. Japan welcomed the efforts of United Nations development agencies to enter the arena at an early stage instead of waiting until the humanitarian agencies had finished their work, thereby easing the transition from relief to development, and promoting security.

23. While humanitarian workers were reticent about the involvement of the military in humanitarian assistance, the Security Council, in its resolution 1546 (2004), requested the Member States and international and regional organizations to contribute assistance, including military forces, to the multinational force in Iraq. Japan believed that in some cases, the engagement of military forces was vital for the implementation of humanitarian assistance activities. The question of military engagement must be discussed not only from the point of view of its impact on the perceptions of the local population, but also from the point of view of what must be done to deliver assistance to people in need. His delegation supported the United Nations approach, which was to make a case-by-case examination of the impact of military engagement on humanitarian assistance.

24. Japan, a disaster-prone country, had found that damage was mitigated in communities whose members understood, before a disaster occurred, what they could do and how they could help each other. Individuals, not just countries, should have ownership of the situation. Because natural disasters were an obstacle to a country's safety, security and sustainable development, a framework was needed to diminish their impact through preparedness and to respond rapidly when they occurred. The World Conference on Disaster Reduction would provide an opportunity to share knowledge and experience, with emphasis on the role of the community and the need to consider disaster reduction in the context of the development of a country.

25. **Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) said that, as stated by the President of the Russian Federation when he had addressed the General Assembly, the humanitarian activities of the United Nations gave the Organization genuine moral and political authority. That authority had been reinforced by a consistent adherence to the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, as set out by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/182. The Member States should confirm their respect for those principles in the face of the new challenges and threats which the humanitarian community was facing.

26. The international community was increasingly confronted with complex humanitarian situations caused by conflicts, epidemics and natural disasters. Its reaction, which must be comprehensive and coordinated, often went beyond the bounds of emergency operations. To ensure the success of humanitarian efforts and post-conflict peace-building, and to lay the foundations of sustainable development, the transition from emergency assistance to development must be smooth. The United Nations must play a leading role in coordinating international efforts at every stage.

27. The matter of internally displaced persons remained topical, and the Russian Federation continued to believe that such individuals must be given legal protection by national legislation and international human-rights instruments. Assistance must be provided only with the consent of the States of which the

recipients were citizens and with the support of the United Nations.

28. Recent events had shown that humanitarian agencies' neutrality and impartiality no longer protected their workers from attacks, which were often deliberate and well planned. Effective action must be taken, in line with the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. As had been pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2004/74), humanitarian staff should follow agreed security practice on the ground and remain sensitive to local customs and traditions. The Russian Federation advocated in-depth discussion of the effect of a military presence on the way humanitarian activity was perceived.

29. There was a growing demand to ensure disaster-preparedness capability by providing rapid-reaction training for national and international humanitarian agencies. His Government saw an important role for the United Nations in improving international disaster-response capacities; it favoured continued improvement of national early-warning systems and the establishment of a worldwide major disaster information network to coordinate and make the most of national capacities in international rescue efforts.

30. There must be adequate financing of humanitarian assistance: the donor base must be widened and mobilization arrangements improved. The United Nations played a key role through the CAP, but the appeals must be made more flexible to encourage non-traditional donors to become more involved in the international effort. Host Government agreed with the suggestion contained in the report of the Secretary-General that the ceiling for United Nations emergency cash grants to countries affected by natural disasters should be increased to $100,000.

31. **Mr. Frisch** (Observer for Switzerland) said that the report of the Secretary-General had correctly identified the aspects of humanitarian activity which should be improved as a matter of priority, including gender mainstreaming, sensitivity to the recipients' culture and awareness of how they perceived assistance. The conduct of the humanitarian staff on the ground must be faultless and meet the highest ethical standards, as the Secretary-General had emphasized in his bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of 9 October 2003 (ST/SGB/2003/13).

32. His Government believed that international humanitarian and human-rights law and international law on the rights of refugees must be observed scrupulously and under all circumstances so that people in need could be protected and helped effectively. It was important for those involved in providing aid to demonstrate through their actions that such aid reflected values shared by all cultures in all parts of the world, such as compassion and concern for others.

33. United Nations peace and security activities often took place in complex and changing circumstances and civilian activities were more and more frequently supported by armed forces. Military forces could indeed be asked to play a supporting role if civilian resources were unable to cope, but humanitarian organizations nevertheless bore primary responsibility in emergencies. For that reason, his Government would like operational steps to be taken to translate into action the 2003 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies.

34. Inter-agency coordination of humanitarian activities was vital. OCHA played an important role in that regard, particularly through IASC. While Switzerland was in favour of integrated missions, the humanitarian component of such missions must be examined thoroughly case by case and against firm and established humanitarian criteria (humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence). In that connection, humanitarian coordinators on the ground should have direct access to the Emergency Relief Coordinator. In the field of disaster preparedness and response, meanwhile, the primary responsibility lay with national authorities, which should establish a multi-sector strategy combining the efforts of local communities, civil society and non-governmental and international organizations.

35. His Government unconditionally condemned any attack against local or international humanitarian staff and believed that suitable methods of managing security must be discussed comprehensively and in detail. In addition, those guilty of such attacks must be prosecuted under national and international law.

36. **Mr. Strømmen** (Observer for Norway) said that he shared the Secretary-General's concern over the increased targeting of humanitarian personnel in situations of armed conflict. Safe and unimpeded access to vulnerable groups was the key to ensuring effective protection of civilians in armed conflict, and denial of access was unacceptable. All parties to an armed conflict must fully comply with the Geneva Conventions. Increased reliance on armed guards and other protective measures must not be the only means of protecting humanitarian personnel. Such measures might prove counterproductive and create greater distance between humanitarian workers and the civilian population, undermine their legitimacy and local support and thwart effective action on the ground. There was a need to ensure a clear division of labour between political, military and humanitarian actors in conflict areas to avoid compromising security, especially in connection with integrated missions. Policy makers, military commanders and military and civilian personnel should become more aware of the necessity to preserve the integrity of independent humanitarian action based on international humanitarian law.

37. Every effort should be made to avoid misperceptions of humanitarian organizations and their work, as in the case of the integrated mission in Liberia, where the issue deserved careful attention. Moreover, increased efforts were needed to promote the awareness and ownership of humanitarian principles and broaden support for humanitarian action. Initiatives to increase participation and empower affected groups could help local, national and international humanitarian workers to carry out their work. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) laid down principles and guidelines that should also be applied to efforts towards that end.

38. His Government had a longstanding commitment to providing stronger legal protection for United Nations and associated personnel and urged all States that had not yet done so to become parties to the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and to implement it fully. However, the protective legal regime for United Nations and associated personnel should be strengthened and the scope of application of the Convention expanded.

39. **Mr. Owuor** (Kenya) said it was disheartening that, although the number of countries requiring humanitarian assistance had remained constant, the pattern of funding humanitarian activities was uneven, leaving some countries underfinanced. His delegation also noted with concern the increased death toll and economic losses in 2003 from natural disasters and environmental emergencies, which underscored the need to invest in national capacities in disaster-prone countries. The increase in the diversity of actors providing humanitarian assistance and the increased engagement of private contractors in the management and distribution of relief assistance were therefore appreciated.

40. The trend towards rejection of humanitarian organizations by belligerent groups was troubling. Of notable concern was the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Iraq in August 2003 as well as the subsequent attack on the International Committee of the Red Cross and humanitarian workers in Afghanistan.

41. Efforts undertaken by various United Nations agencies towards building a strong partnership with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the call for a regional approach to humanitarian crises in the West African region were welcome. His Government supported the call for substantial resources and coordination of the highest quality to ensure that conditions for the reintegration of internally displaced persons and refugees were in place and welcomed the major ongoing repatriation operations in Angola, Eritrea, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, as well as the positive developments in resolving political crises in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia.

42. His delegation abhorred the increasing use of sexual abuse and violence against women and minors and therefore commended the Secretary-General's Bulletin, of 9 October 2003, entitled "Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse".

43. In conclusion, his delegation endorsed the recommendation that the ceiling for emergency cash grants for any one disaster should be raised to $100,000 per country, within the existing resources in the regular budget, and supported the ongoing preparation for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

44. **Mr. Onishchenko** (Ukraine), noting with satisfaction that much valuable work had been done to

strengthen the coordination of United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance, largely owing to the expanded activities of OCHA, as well as the efforts that had been made to strengthen the role of IASC, said that his Government was concerned about the alarming spread of HIV/AIDS in humanitarian crises. There was a need to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, to integrate HIV/AIDS considerations into humanitarian programmes and to follow IASC guidelines for HIV/AIDS interventions in emergency settings. National strategies to address the spread of HIV among humanitarian workers and international peacekeepers must also be developed. As a major troop-contributing country to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Ukraine had been among the first to incorporate HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention and safe behaviour in pre-deployment training for its peacekeeping units.

45. With respect to the transition from relief to development, there was a need for better alignment between humanitarian assistance and long-term development assistance. The establishment of a standing mechanism comprised of the secretariats of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee for Peace and Security was a welcome response to transition needs. Enhanced cooperation between humanitarian agencies and development institutions was still needed, however, to strengthen transition activities.

46. His Government had experienced a transition from relief to development when mitigating the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and attached particular significance to the role of the United Nations in strengthening the international response to it. The recent transfer of coordination functions for United Nations Chernobyl-related activities from OCHA to the United Nations Development Programme would stimulate resource mobilization and enhance the impact of development and health projects, which his Government urged the donor community to continue to support.

47. **Mr. Zhang** Yishan (China) said that countries with the ability to do so should increase their contributions to humanitarian assistance and reduce the proportion of earmarked funds to ensure that funds were directed where they were most needed. The terrorist attacks and other causes of insecurity that had posed serious threats to the personal safety of humanitarian workers and obstructed the channels for disaster relief were also a matter of concern to his delegation.

48. The United Nations and the international community should abide by the guiding principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality set forth in General Assembly resolution 46/182 and carry out humanitarian action with the consent of the affected countries. His delegation hoped that OCHA would better coordinate the relief work and delivery of materials in affected countries and avoid wasting resources.

49. China had frequently been hit by natural disasters, such as earthquakes and floods, causing heavy economic losses. His delegation expressed its appreciation for the assistance that OCHA had provided in disaster areas in China during the previous year. His Government, in turn, had provided some emergency humanitarian assistance through multilateral and bilateral channels to a number of disaster-stricken developing countries and supported the OCHA initiative to establish a partnership for that purpose. It stood ready to further strengthen its cooperation with OCHA in areas such as natural disaster management and search and rescue.

50. **Mr. Gopinathan** (India) said that humanitarian workers must strictly abide by the basic principles of neutrality, humanity and impartiality. Humanitarian action should be apolitical and offered at the request of the recipient government. It was also important to provide a local face to humanitarian action, which could be accomplished by hiring personnel who lived in close geographical proximity, were familiar with the location and nature of a given crisis and had prior experience with similar emergencies. Procuring resources locally or from neighbouring regions and hiring local transport companies could save resources, promote local capacity-building and reduce delays. Regional approaches to humanitarian assistance might not be useful for all regions or for every situation, however.

51. The United Nations must allocate resources fairly and evenly to countries in need of humanitarian assistance and not be seen as favouring one humanitarian cause over another. Financial assistance provided by the international financial institutions such as the World Bank must not bring with it additional conditionalities or add to the debt burden of the

recipient countries. His Government strongly supported the recommendation contained in the Secretary-General's report (E/2004/74) whereby donor countries would be invited to make available increased amounts of unearmarked, predictable funding for relief assistance.

52. In order to make humanitarian assistance effective, it would be preferable to avoid a multiplicity of actors in disaster management. Coordination efforts should not become the most important function of the humanitarian activities. The role of national Governments and respect for national sovereignty should be stressed.

53. Sharing of technologies such as remote sensing, geographical information systems, global positioning, computer modelling and expert systems and electronic information management would go a long way towards assisting developing countries to be better prepared to deal with natural disasters. His delegation therefore supported the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report to channel increased resources for capacity-building activities to disaster-prone areas and noted with concern the low level of funding by donors for capacity-building in disaster reduction and recovery compared with funding for conflict and post-conflict activities.

54. The Secretary-General's Bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse was commendable. However, his delegation had serious misgivings about the exhortation to incorporate the standards set forth in the Bulletin into domestic legislations and codes of conduct for national armed forces and police and other security forces, matters that fell within the jurisdiction of national Governments. The United Nations must avoid intrusive tendencies, even if the objective seemed desirable, so as to maintain the universal trust of Member States.

55. **Mr. Laurin** (Canada) said that, although the United Nations and other bodies involved in humanitarian action had made substantial progress in addressing many of the serious shortcomings identified by the multinational evaluation of the response to the Rwandan genocide, many of the challenges highlighted in 1994 were still of concern. The international community was still struggling to meet the protection needs of civilians affected by conflict, to develop appropriate responses to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide and to minimize counter-productive donor, agency and affected government behaviour. In addition, there was a need to build the capacity of vulnerable communities, countries and regions in order to mitigate the impact of natural disasters and to respond to the triple threat of HIV/AIDS, food insecurity and weakened capacity for governance. The transition from relief to development must also be managed more effectively. Each of those challenges necessitated significant political engagement, adequate resources and the commitment of all partners to effective cooperation.

56. His delegation shared the Secretary-General's concerns about the obstacles to humanitarian access, the insecurity faced by aid workers and the erosion of humanitarian principles and agreed that the humanitarian community must better communicate its purpose and objectives to local populations and non-State armed actors. Governments must also be more aware of the implications of their decisions to use military forces to carry out humanitarian activities.

57. The Humanitarian Forum held in March 2004 in Geneva had been an important step towards reinvigorating the dialogue among humanitarian actors. Responses to new crises, particularly in the areas of safety and operational planning, should not be entirely shaped by the experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. In principle, his delegation supported the concept of integrated missions, which allowed for more coherent and effective responses to crises. However, the successful implementation of such missions required solid collaboration among the political, peacekeeping, humanitarian and development arms of the United Nations under the leadership of the special representatives and the humanitarian/resident coordinators.

58. Member States would also benefit from further dialogue with United Nations humanitarian actors on when integrated missions should be used and from continued guidance on the nature and appropriateness of military involvement in humanitarian operations. In that connection, his delegation called on OCHA to promote the use of the Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief and the IASC reference paper, which provided a practical framework for clarifying ways in which military forces could support humanitarian efforts without undermining respect for humanitarian principles.

59. His delegation was deeply disturbed by the dire impact on humanitarian action of the failure of many States and armed groups to respect international humanitarian law and principles. The international community must be resolute in its response to violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, better promote the responsibility of affected States to ensure the protection of civilians and be prepared to take action when such States fail to do so. The tools to address civilian protection issues that had been developed over the past 5 years must be put to better use and, where necessary, new ones should be developed. Impunity must be aggressively combated.

60. Regional organizations could and must play a more active role in promoting the protection of civilians and, to that end, his delegation strongly encouraged the United Nations to enhance its dialogue with them. In parallel, the humanitarian community must build its own capacity to address protection concerns, and therefore IASC should develop appropriate training tools and address the nexus between human rights and humanitarian action in the field. Furthermore, any increased capacity to address civilian protection must incorporate a gender perspective. In that connection, his delegation hoped that the IASC review of its 1999 policy statement on mainstreaming a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance would include concrete measures for action.

61. The provision of timely and flexible resources commensurate with the needs of affected populations remained an elusive goal. However, over the past year, donors had been taking action to follow up the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative and were working to develop a comprehensive definition of humanitarian action for statistical purposes and to harmonize reporting requirements from humanitarian agencies. The agenda of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative was ambitious and would take time to implement. Donors' efforts must be supported by the good receivership of partners from the United Nations system, the Red Cross and the NGO community. Some of the principles of the that agenda could also apply to the transition from relief to development. Donors often undermined their own investments in humanitarian aid by failing to put the countries they assisted on the necessary footing for sustainable development. United Nations agencies had a leadership role to play in helping the international community improve its response to transition situations, particularly in view of the anticipated signing of several new peace agreements.

62. In sum, the overall objective was to ensure that humanitarian action responded effectively to those affected by complex emergencies and natural disasters. Strengthening the coordination of humanitarian aid was an essential element of any timely and effective international response, a necessary means to the ultimate end of protecting the rights and assuring the well-being of those who relied on the international community for aid.

63. **Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga** (Ecuador) said that, according to the World Disasters Report 2003, over the last 10 years, the number of disasters had increased by 62.7 per cent and the number of people affected by those disasters had risen by 54 per cent. A wide range of sources confirmed that climate change was the main reason for the increased frequency of natural disasters and, if the impact of global warming was not aggressively countered with disaster-reduction measures, by 2050 an average of 100,000 people per year would lose their lives. The direct economic consequences would amount to around US$ 300 billion per year.

64. The worsening effects of climate change were accompanied by increasingly vulnerable populations. Poverty had led to greater exposure to risk and created an environment in which natural disasters were causing increasingly serious problems. In those circumstances, disasters had the potential to endanger development and represented a global threat to those living in poverty. In order to address the situation, risk reduction activities must be stepped up in order to prevent or limit the impact of natural disasters and ensure an effective and efficient response to them. In that connection, the 2005 Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction would offer the international community an opportunity to reinforce existing cooperation mechanisms and formulate a specific action plan and an efficient follow-up mechanism in order to attain the objectives established by the General Assembly, particularly those contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The United Nations, under the leadership of OCHA, had an essential role to play in that process.

65. **Mr. Osman** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies(IFRC)) said that, for some years, IFRC had taken the view that the

international community must do more to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. To that end, the third general objective of the Agenda for Humanitarian Action, adopted by the 28th International Conference of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, called on all States to work together in order to minimize the impact of disasters through implementation of disaster-risk-reduction measures and improving preparedness and response mechanisms.

66. The tendency to deal with each problem separately had persisted for too long, but the new processes now in place had done much to promote the realization that only a common approach could successfully meet current humanitarian needs. IFRC welcomed the recognition by the Secretary-General that an understanding of the applicable law was absolutely necessary to the efficient and timely management of disaster situations.

67. The section of the report on natural disasters placed welcome emphasis on building capacities for disaster preparedness and response, including the training of local volunteers. The tragedy in Bam had clearly illustrated the need for such work, which had been crucial in saving the lives of the most vulnerable members of society. However, it had also drawn attention to the fact that, when a disaster captured the attention of the world's media, assistance flowed freely. Governments and organizations must find new ways of identifying resources to cater for the needs of affected populations once media attention dwindled.

68. In recent years, IASC had become increasingly focused on true vulnerability, and his organization was particularly pleased that it had started to contribute significantly to improving the coordination of humanitarian disaster response. IFRC was also a member of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. It felt strongly that disasters broke down communities' and individuals' resilience and coping mechanisms and undermined efforts to reduce poverty and contribute to sustainable development. In that connection, the vital role of disaster risk reduction mechanisms would be addressed by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005.

69. IFRC looked forward to the adoption of a strong and focused resolution on the strengthening of humanitarian assistance and disaster reduction and to working with Member States and international organizations to produce results of real value to those in need.

70. **Mr. Moon** (Republic of Korea) pointed out that, with an estimated 35 million refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide and the all-too-frequent emergence of new conflicts and natural disasters, a continued focus on ways to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance was essential. He stressed the need to develop a framework within which the United Nations could engage with regional bodies on the humanitarian issue on a more systematic basis. Such bodies were uniquely positioned to respond to local crises because they were well informed about conditions on the ground and were, at times, able to respond more promptly and effectively to humanitarian crises than outside actors. Accordingly, he supported the concept of regional partnership proposed by OCHA with a view to facilitating regional cooperation in the field of humanitarian activities among Member States and between Member States and the United Nations system. Furthermore, regional bodies needed to be more involved in humanitarian assistance efforts from the outset, thereby enabling them not only to address the needs of civilian populations but also to provide early warnings about impending crises.

71. In light of the increasing diversity of actors providing humanitarian assistance, greater attention must be given to effective coordination. Moreover, the increased engagement of civil society and the direct involvement of military personnel in relief and reconstruction activities had blurred the traditional distinction between military and civilian roles in complex emergencies, which could have both positive and negative implications. Combining those roles could increase the coherence and effectiveness of humanitarian activities, but might also reinforce misperceptions and jeopardize the appearance of neutrality in the context of humanitarian assistance. Nevertheless, his delegation took the view that combined operations could be effective, particularly when the security situation on the ground prohibited traditional humanitarian groups from delivering assistance. In that connection, further work must be done to better assess the role of military engagement in relief activities and its impact on the perception of humanitarian activities.

72. Since funding for humanitarian operations was dwindling, it was essential to improve their efficacy in order to strengthen the international community's

response to complex emergencies. The Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative provided a good basis for ensuring that humanitarian assistance was provided in accordance with humanitarian principles and that it was backed by a firm financial commitment. Furthermore, to better define humanitarian needs in a transparent and consistent manner, the CAP Needs Assessment Framework and Matrix (NAFM) should be further developed. The Republic of Korea supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that the ceiling for emergency cash grants should be raised from US$ 50,000 to US$ 100,000: those grants played a vital role in enabling disaster-affected countries to purchase relief supplies and equipment while awaiting further support from the international community.

73. In conclusion, he said that coordination at both the field and policy levels was a key factor in ensuring the efficacy of humanitarian assistance. Policy-level coordination included the sharing of information and lessons learned among and between Member States and the United Nations and, in that connection, his delegation was looking forward to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

74. **Mr. Oosthuizen** (Observer for South Africa) expressed his concern that the pattern of funding for humanitarian activities remained uneven. Emergencies that attracted high levels of media attention received more financial assistance than other less high-profile incidents, which contradicted the spirit of various United Nations resolutions calling on the international community to provide assistance in proportion to specific needs and also gave the erroneous impression that funding for humanitarian assistance had increased because of the huge contributions to the highlighted crises. Too often, donors became involved at the height of the crisis only to disengage after the initial concerns were addressed.

75. In that connection, his delegation shared the Secretary-General's concerns about slow-onset disasters, which were of serious concern to Africa as they had a direct impact on food security. The international community as a whole must better address such disasters and their humanitarian impact in a coordinated fashion. His delegation also supported the Secretary-General's recommendation to raise the ceiling for emergency cash grants.

76. The complex issue of the perception and acceptance of humanitarian organizations must be discussed further. Attacks on those organizations, as well as on United Nations personnel, should be condemned and attackers must be brought to justice in accordance with existing judicial principles. Furthermore, the increasing diversity of actors providing humanitarian assistance and the direct involvement of armed forces in relief and construction activities must be better addressed by, inter alia, reviewing and clarifying the guidelines on civil-military relations. In that regard, his delegation supported the efforts of OCHA to ensure that the principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence were respected, particularly in the context of the design and implementation of integrated missions. Improving the communication between humanitarian organizations and local populations regarding the purpose of their activities, as well as increased sensitivity by all personnel to national and local customs and traditions, would greatly facilitate efforts to improve the perception and acceptance of those organizations.

77. His delegation also endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation concerning the integration of a gender perspective into the planning, programming and implementation of humanitarian activities when addressing complex emergencies and the importance of a regional approach, particularly on the African continent. In that connection, the African Union had recently adopted the Protocol relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council, which would, inter alia, address humanitarian assistance and disaster prevention. However, the need for and importance of regional approaches should not be used as an excuse for the discontinuation of international assistance.

78. **Mr. Briz Gutiérrez** (Guatemala) said that the safety of personnel involved in humanitarian and development activities was vital to the success of their work. The change in the way that humanitarian organizations were perceived had been illustrated by an ever-increasing number of attacks against United Nations staff and facilities and, in that connection, the Secretariat's efforts to reduce the risks to which humanitarian workers were exposed, while drawing attention to the need for respect for local traditions and customs, was a welcome development.

79. He underlined the importance of determining the best way to finance humanitarian activities, including those relating to natural disasters. Financing must be

predictable and sufficient to meet needs on the ground. Funds must be distributed equitably and in accordance with humanitarian principles and, once provided, must be managed effectively.

80. The holding of an event on the important issue of the transition from relief to development was particularly timely, since it was precisely through such activities that the Economic and Social Council could contribute to improving the coherence of United Nations activities in the humanitarian, political, human rights and development spheres. In that connection, he shared the Secretary-General's concerns about the potentially negative impact of humanitarian assistance on cooperation for development. A clear distinction must be drawn between emergency assistance and rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance.

81. Strengthening the effective coordination and planning of humanitarian assistance required a genuine commitment to that end from the various actors involved. In that regard, it would be useful to engage in a dialogue on the role of those actors in the humanitarian, political and peacekeeping areas and the complementary nature of their activities.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.

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Provisional summary record of the 35th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 13 July 2004, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Penjo (Vice-President) ..... (Bhutan)

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Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*)

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In the absence of Ms. Risa (Finland), Mr. Penjo (Bhutan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*) (A/59/86-E/2004/69 and A/59/93-E/2004/74)

Panel discussion on strengthening preparedness and response to natural disasters, with an emphasis on capacity-building

1. **The President** said that the impact of natural disasters was an urgent and growing problem that affected all countries. Although natural hazards occurred in both developed and developing countries, they often affected developing countries more severely, leaving large numbers of people chronically vulnerable. In 2003, some 700 disasters had caused 75,000 deaths — a toll almost seven times that of the previous year, resulting in economic losses of over US$ 65 billion. A number of emerging trends pointed to even bleaker prospects for the future. The international community needed to take an integrated approach to natural disaster management — from preparedness to reduction and response — focusing on efforts to build and strengthen regional and local capacity.

2. **Mr. Egeland** (United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator), Moderator, said that natural disasters represented one of the greatest humanitarian challenges, which was underestimated by the international media and did not receive adequate attention. The fact that in an average year seven times more people were affected by natural disasters than by complex emergencies, wars and conflicts underscored the importance of preparing for, responding to and preventing such disasters. Currently, South Asia was affected by the worst monsoon floods for more than a decade with millions of people rendered homeless. In that regard, two of the countries most affected, Bangladesh and India, were among the countries with the best preparedness and response mechanisms in the world. While the international community stood ready to respond whenever required to do so, those two countries demonstrated that the first line of defence was the best line of defence, when it worked.

3. The Council would hear presentations about international response mechanisms, including the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), which could assemble and deploy United Nations disaster assessment teams and search-and-rescue teams anywhere in the world within hours of a disaster, as had been done in the case of the earthquake in Bam, Islamic Republic of Iran. The discussions would also cover the early warning mechanisms of a number of United Nations agencies as well as efforts to build local and international preparedness and response capacity. Early warning was not very useful if it did not lead to early intervention and early response and preparedness.

4. **Mr. Graisse** (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP)), panellist, said that preparing for natural disasters required both planning and flexibility in executing those plans in order to respond effectively to the needs of affected countries and populations. Since the late 1990s, the international community had enhanced its ability to address emergency preparedness and response issues at the local, regional and global levels. WFP had reviewed and strengthened its capacity for early warning, enhanced its information management capacity and strengthened the ability of its decentralized regional bureaux to prepare for potential emerging crises and adjust to shifting scenarios on the ground.

5. Overall, early warning capacities had been well-developed, as demonstrated by the joint work of the humanitarian community through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the use of humanitarian common services to support operational response. However, the key was not just to issue warnings but to ensure that structures at the provincial and grass-roots levels were capable of a rapid response. "Early warning" must become "early action". Quick response to natural disasters also required flexible programming tools to rapidly meet the increased humanitarian needs caused by a disaster. In that regard, WFP had developed an extensive institutional network of development assistance in schools, mother-and-child health centres and food-for-work activities. Such structures were effective because their administrative mechanisms were already in place and could be expanded quickly in reaction to disasters, in collaboration and consultation with local authorities, further promoting government participation and capacity-building.

6. The crises in southern Africa highlighted a number of important issues with regard to emergency

preparedness. Indeed, poor and erratic rainfall in mid-2002 in that region had led to major food shortages, aggravating a situation already made fragile by HIV/AIDS, chronic poverty and weakened governance structures. WFP had quickly designed and sent to donors a special operation for regional logistics coordination through an office established in Johannesburg and food had begun to move very quickly. It had also assisted other agencies, including non-governmental organizations, with a separate food pipeline by sharing the logistics assessment information and helping to avoid port congestion. In that regard, the Special Envoy for Humanitarian Needs for Southern Africa had consistently noted the need for collaboration between all stakeholders — national Governments, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations — as essential for meeting people's needs in southern Africa. The Special Envoy's most recent mission had strongly suggested that the United Nations should increasingly rationalize its use of resources to develop a United Nations response, as opposed to agency-specific initiatives.

7. Another main finding of that mission was the need for capacity-building in that region. While the United Nations system had already provided substantial report to the Vulnerability Assessment Committees of the Southern African Development Community, it needed to continue to help Governments rebuild their capacity for service delivery at the community level. It was also vital that early warning systems, including indicators on natural disasters and socio-economic factors, should be strengthened at both regional and national levels. Furthermore, vulnerability assessments must be improved to include the systematic monitoring of market prices and non-food needs analysis, cross-border trade and better understanding of linkages between HIV/AIDS, food security, malnutrition and coping strategies.

8. Bangladesh was a good example of what could be achieved by improving natural disaster management through the building of national capacity. WFP, bilateral donors and other partners from the United Nations and non-governmental organizations had supported that Government's national food security policy and food assistance programmes. Over the past decade, the Government had become less reliant on international assistance in responding to natural disasters and could more effectively manage its own disaster mitigation activities.

9. One innovative approach currently being explored by WFP was acute hunger insurance for people affected by weather-related disasters. WFP and the World Bank had begun a project to develop a formal insurance mechanism which would provide cash aid at the appropriate time and create important incentives to mitigate risk. The project, which built upon existing insurance instruments, would also allow the international humanitarian community to draw upon the financial and technical resources of the private insurance sector to help meet better and in a more timely fashion the acute food needs of victims of natural disasters.

10. **Ms. Taft** (Assistant Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)), panellist, said that the impact from natural disasters was devastating for those caught unprepared and in some respects greater than the impact from conflict. More than 3 million people had perished in natural disasters over the past two decades. In many countries, natural disasters had wiped out in a matter of hours hard-earned development gains that had been decades in the making. The immediate response to such crises was dominated by humanitarian assistance and emergency management. As in post-conflict situations, however, there was often a planning gap between the humanitarian assistance and recovery phases.

11. When the international community did not plan for recovery, it often lost an opportunity to make sure that its early responses avoided risks. In that regard, very careful planning should take into account the need to reduce vulnerability by ensuring, for example, that houses in a seismic zone were rebuilt to certain standards or that they were not located in flood plains and were storm-resistant. Crises often offered opportunities for change and for establishing foundations for sustainable development. Natural disasters compromised development, but short-sighted development choices increased disaster risks. Reckless urbanization, the concentration of poor people in hazard-prone areas, unsafe buildings and environmental degradation all magnified the potential impact of disaster.

12. While the humanitarian community had helped immensely in mitigating the loss and suffering associated with disasters, more action was needed to undertake long-term measures to mitigate disaster risks, particularly if the Millennium Development Goals were to be achieved. There was a need, first, to

improve collective understanding of risk and vulnerability, since natural disasters and their devastating impact on society were not necessarily inevitable. In that regard, UNDP had developed a global disaster risk index (DRI) which measured the relative vulnerability of countries to three key natural hazards — earthquakes, tropical cyclones and floods — and identified development factors that contributed to increased risk levels. DRI demonstrated how countries with similar levels of exposure to natural hazards experienced widely differing impacts, proving that natural disasters and their aftermath were often man-made rather than natural. UNDP was working with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme on disaster reduction and developing web-based tools and an overview of best practices in risk management, as well as on other tools to be introduced during the World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

13. Secondly, there was a need for an enabling environment for risk reduction, with a focus on governance and capacity-building. Improving governance for risk management required that disaster risk considerations should be mainstreamed into a broader range of governmental and civil society institutions. Thirdly, it must be ensured that where disaster struck, there should be transitional recovery programming that looked beyond the immediate emergency. That required building on local capacities, rebuilding structures that were seismically resistant as well as increased coordination with a whole range of partners, ensuring that risk reduction was considered in key aspects such as legislation, national development plans and poverty reduction strategy papers. UNDP stood ready to assist with the training to build those national capacities.

14. In conclusion, she reiterated the importance of risk reduction and prevention as central components of the bridge between humanitarian and recovery efforts. Despite the connection between poverty and vulnerability, funding for capacity-building in disaster reduction and recovery remained a challenge and UNDP looked forward to working with all partners to try to build more sustainable communities that would be less prone to disaster.

15. **Mr. Frisch** (Chairman, International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG)), panellist, said that his presentation on the recent experience, trends and global challenges of international search-and-rescue would draw from the lessons learned from recent major events, particularly the earthquakes in Bam, Islamic Republic of Iran, and in Algeria in 2003. His presentation would focus on rapidity, coordination, effectiveness and consistency, all of which were linked with preparedness and strengthening national and regional capacity-building.

16. With regard to rapidity, the national and international response to rapid-onset natural disasters must be immediate in order to be effective and efficient, knowing that time was a life-saving factor. It was therefore essential to build up the capacities of teams in disaster-prone countries. In that regard, while the transferred know-how from experienced teams had been a part of the INSARAG strategy for the past 10 years, that strategy would be revised during the current year in the light of the Secretary-General's recommendations.

17. Turning to coordination, he endorsed paragraph 48 of the Secretary-General's report (A/59/93-E/2004/74), noting the paramount role of United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams in any international assistance effort. The duplication of coordination mechanisms could not be allowed in such situations and the use of the Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Center and UNDAC, activated and monitored by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva as overall coordinator, offered a measurable value added. Furthermore, discussions had started between the Office and the European Union in order to avoid duplications on the ground.

18. As far as effectiveness was concerned, while immediate local response was often the most effective, only fully equipped, self-contained and high-quality international search-and-rescue teams should be authorized to go into affected countries to perform relief work. The effectiveness and efficiency of such international teams could be monitored from time to time, for example, through regular participation in training exercises or even peer reviews. In the aftermath of a disaster, it was important to provide thorough, practical and factual reporting on the situation to the local population, including families of victims.

19. Turning to consistency, he noted that any serious disaster risk reduction efforts in a context of the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction required investment in long-term

structural prevention activities in parallel with preparedness projects. Much needed to be done at the national level to mainstream disaster reduction into budgets and into long-term plans, while the international community should be closely associated with such efforts, as should civil society organizations, including the private sector. Disaster reduction belonged squarely on the agenda of the humanitarian community, as acknowledged at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. The World Conference on Disaster Reduction should help to create the necessary momentum for intensifying common action in that regard.

20. **Mr. Mohaghegh** (Operations Coordinator, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)), panellist, said that the incapacity of developing countries to make sufficient investment in disaster mitigation greatly increased their vulnerability to natural disasters. Meanwhile, the trend of natural disasters, whether sudden-onset or slow-onset, showed no decrease on the global scale. The damage caused to communities must be measured thoroughly, and effective preparedness and response mechanisms must be foreseen.

21. Effective preparedness should be complementary to long-term preventive measures including vulnerability and risk reduction, and should be based on awareness, which must be established at the community level, among families and individuals, and in rural and remote areas, in particular disaster-prone areas. Efforts to strengthen disaster preparedness should aim first and foremost at capacity-building of communities, and should focus on the least developed, most vulnerable communities. Collaborative mechanisms were needed where the different actors cooperated on the basis of shared principles and objectives. In particular, States should seek ways of promoting social cooperation in disaster preparedness and enabling potential resources and capacities to be identified and utilized.

22. The experience of IFRC and its national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in 181 countries was a good example of community-based and comprehensive disaster preparedness. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Red Crescent Society had benefited from its community-based disaster preparedness to respond effectively to various natural disasters, including the Bam earthquake on 26 December 2003. Because they had been trained and organized in advance, over 18,000 volunteers mobilized from all over the country had been able to provide rescue, relief and shelter to thousands of victims. Within 48 hours, more than 15,000 injured persons had received emergency medical care, and about 15,000 people had been given food, shelter and other relief. While the generous support of the international humanitarian community to the Bam operation had been much appreciated, the fact remained that the number of victims rescued by local relief workers and volunteers had far exceeded those rescued by international search-and-rescue teams. During the recent earthquake in Morocco, the Moroccan Red Crescent had benefited from the capacity of its volunteers and branches and presented a successful example of community-based disaster preparedness and coordination with the Government. In both earthquakes, IFRC had deployed field assessment and coordination teams and emergency response units, and also launched international appeals.

23. Coordination of international humanitarian assistance was the key to successful disaster response at the local, national and international levels. The role of local communities and beneficiaries should be taken into account much more fully. At the national level, disaster preparedness plans must include a clear definition of roles and responsibilities of the various actors, taking into account the social and cultural characteristics of the country concerned. States should allocate more time and resources to disaster preparedness and coordination and networking with other civil society groups. A long-term and comprehensive approach to disaster preparedness and response was needed at the national level.

24. Respect for the dignity of affected populations and beneficiaries must be considered the first principle of any disaster relief operation. Victims should be treated as equal partners in humanitarian assistance. International humanitarian intervention should play a complementary and auxiliary role, and the approach should be one of capacity-building and long-term preparedness in the affected population, instead of creating a dependency on external assistance. International assistance could then play a positive and constructive role in promotion of civil society.

25. States should facilitate international humanitarian assistance by providing access to the affected population and allowing the entry of humanitarian aid. The IFRC International Disaster Response Laws, Rules

and Principles were an appropriate framework for the effective delivery of international assistance. They had been successfully used during the Bam operation when, for the first time, the United Nations and IFRC had coordinated their appeals for international assistance to avoid any gap or overlap and had launched both appeals jointly.

26. **Mr. Arrion** (European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO)), panellist, said that there was a clear need for enhanced preparedness, given the evolution of humanitarian needs. Throughout the 1990s, an estimated 200 million people had been affected by natural disasters each year, and an estimated 80,000 had been killed. Of those victims, 97 per cent had been in developing countries. Good humanitarian donorship required an increased emphasis on consistency, transparency and advocacy. Furthermore, good donors should focus on appropriate forward-planning instruments and methodologies, early warning and alert mechanisms, rapid decision-making processes, effective implementation of assistance through high-quality partners, close cooperation with other key humanitarian players and enhanced preparedness for a smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation and development. Among the innovative approaches to be supported by good donors, early warning monitoring must be permanent and continuous. The use of new technologies, including capacity-building for Internet-based crisis monitoring and alerts, should also be encouraged. The European Commission had developed a process of global needs assessments through which it had adopted a comparative approach across 130 countries using global indicators. Among other innovations, it had also developed a disaster risk index, which broke down risk levels both globally and within various regions and countries.

27. **Mr. Egeland** (United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator), Moderator, invited participants to comment on the presentations made by the panellists.

28. **Mr. Simancas** (Observer for Mexico) said that everything possible had to be done to prevent or counter the effects of disasters. However, the primary role, whether in cases of natural disasters or conflicts, devolved on States, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

29. **Mr. Faber** (Observer for the Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia; and the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, said that the European Union recognized that the international community was failing to invest adequately in disaster preparedness and hoped that the upcoming World Conference on Disaster Reduction would provide a forum to address the issues of capacity-building, contingency planning, preparedness and ownership. As the European Union prepared its own disaster preparedness strategy to complement the existing United Nations arrangements, it wondered how both would blend with national strategies. The European Union was also interested in how the private sector in each country could helpfully be involved in disaster response and longer-term preparedness.

30. **Mr. Arrion** (ECHO) said that the European Union's response mechanism was primarily designed to work within the Union but could be extended beyond its geographical space. Problems of duplication would have to be avoided in field operations by coordinating procedures with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. To avoid competition with the more global United Nations system, he envisaged an arrangement operating within concentric circles whereby a light and flexible European Union response or planning could feed into the global setting.

31. **Mr. Frisch** (Chairman, International Search and Rescue Advisory Group) said that the international community should focus on building self-sufficient capacity in every country for search and rescue, relief and ultimately, recovery and reconstruction. Teams could also be deployed in case of need elsewhere for training and other preparedness activities. Most important would be coordination among sectoral ministries but also among humanitarian relief and assistance agencies, with host countries taking the lead. He found it unacceptable that participating agencies were reluctant to accept coordination.

32. **Mr. Mohaghegh** (Operations Coordinator, IFRC) said that it was practically impossible to achieve 100 per cent preparedness because the very concept of an emergency, based on the element of time and the scale of the disaster, suggested that control of the damage incurred was beyond the capacity of local communities. Efforts to improve local capacity must be ongoing, because disaster preparedness provided an

opportunity to take stock of local resources, challenges and circumstances. It was quite natural that differences existed between international and local systems of disaster preparedness because such differences were based on variations between national circumstances. There was therefore a need to gain a deeper understanding of each country's capacities, systems and resources. In executing emergency response, it must be recognized that there might be potential resources and systems already existing in the country concerned. In addition, an effective information management system and coordination mechanism should already be in place to make use of local knowledge and shared information, without losing sight of the objective of local capacity-building and long-term self-sufficiency in the affected communities.

33. **Mr. Egeland** (United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator) referred to a memorandum of understanding on cooperation that was being finalized with the European Commission to guarantee full harmony in field operations. Based on recent disaster experiences, it had been shown that field work could be further streamlined and that lines of responsibility could be clarified, particularly in situations where time was of the essence.

34. **Ms. Taft** (Assistant Administrator, UNDP) said that there were usually local resources available in countries and communities where disasters occurred that could be channelled for recovery. It was important for donors and responding entities to know what was available. Local procurement was not only an important means by which to boost the economy but it also ensured that the commodities provided were appropriate to the community concerned. Since the private sector was usually involved in rebuilding infrastructure after disasters occurred, it was important to incorporate safety standards into the reconstruction phase and to ensure that private contractors understood techniques in building risk-resistant structures. To that end, national authorities could play a useful role in providing training and partnerships.

35. She welcomed the World Bank and WFP insurance scheme initiative and said that UNDP was also interested in insurance for situations that extended beyond drought and food security. She also saw much scope for private sector involvement in the improvement of communications through greater use of information technology. The best means of communication, however, was listening to the needs and advice expressed by the local population.

36. **Mr. Graisse** (Deputy Executive Director, WFP) clarified that WFP was actively exploring the possibility of developing an insurance scheme and that discussions with the World Bank were currently under way. On the question of private sector involvement, he said that there certainly was a role for the private sector; however, the main source of funding was the public sector, either international donor agencies or individual countries.

37. **Ms. Golberg** (Canada), noting the tremendous progress made in the area of natural disaster preparedness, particularly in terms of accountability and coordination, and referring to the work of UNDP in mainstreaming disaster reduction into development programmes, asked what UNDP would describe as the key challenges encountered in persuading countries to integrate disaster reduction strategies into their sustainable development plans. She also commented that risk and vulnerability needed to be considered beyond the country or local community level to include an understanding of differences in vulnerabilities among individuals.

38. Referring to the collaboration between local and international emergency response efforts during the recent earthquake in the Islamic Republic of Iran, she asked how capacity-building could be enhanced between IFRC and national societies, and what role the international donor community could play in that regard. She further highlighted the importance of advance preparations and suggested that donors should enhance their preparedness mechanisms in order to be ready and able to respond to the needs assessments that arose. She also wondered where the UNDAC mechanism could fit into the common United Nations response.

39. **Mr. Backström** (Finland) asked whether any calculations had been made to determine the cost of helping developing countries to reach the same level of preparedness as had been achieved in the industrialized world. He believed that raising the level of preparedness throughout the international community once and for all, was crucial since effective disaster preparedness and response were the keys to saving lives and property.

40. **Mr. Mosselmans** (United Kingdom) outlined measures recently adopted by his Government's

Department for International Development to encourage country offices to integrate disaster preparedness into long-term development programmes. In that regard, he wondered whether the representatives of ECHO or INSARAG could offer any advice on best practices or general guidance on disaster reduction strategy.

41. His delegation agreed that it was vital to encourage developing countries to integrate risk reduction into their development planning, and found it regrettable that the analysis of disaster risk management had often not been incorporated into development strategies. The United Kingdom also supported the concept of a common United Nations response as opposed to strictly agency-specific initiatives, but recognized the need for donors to support and strengthen the international agencies that were most prominent in the field. It recognized the role of climate change in disaster reduction and preparedness and would continue to accord high priority to climate change and environmental issues in various forums.

42. **Ms. Eckey** (Observer for Norway) said that in the delivery of relief aid it was important for donor countries to consider the most efficient use of limited resources. In the light of the comments made by the panellists on the need to listen to beneficiaries and other vulnerable groups in disaster-affected areas as prime sources of information and guidance, she asked how the organizations represented by the panel and their implementing agencies ensured that those sectors were given an opportunity to be heard and to participate in relief efforts.

43. **Mr. Shimamori** (Japan) said that his Government looked forward to hosting the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005. He fully supported the view that greater emphasis should be placed on risk reduction and response, and especially welcomed the importance previous speakers had attached to the involvement of local populations and the need to incorporate disaster management into development policy.

44. With reference to comments made by the representative of IFRC on efforts to raise awareness and promote preparedness at the level of families, he said that Japan had learned from its experience, in the aftermath of the Kobe earthquake, that close-knit communities were best poised to successfully mitigate the adverse effects of disasters. He asked what challenges the Iranian response and relief efforts had faced in enhancing awareness and what remedies had been adopted in meeting those challenges.

45. **Mr. Zhang** (China) said that countries were increasingly devoting attention to capacity-building and disaster response. The experience gained from the recent earthquakes in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Morocco confirmed that rapid response was critical to saving lives and highlighted the value of government intervention in providing effective logistical support. Noting that the United Nations had adopted a number of measures to improve national capacity-building in preparedness and response to natural disasters, he said that China welcomed all attempts to forge effective international cooperation in disaster relief management and disaster reduction techniques to enhance national capacities.

46. **Mr. Oosthuizen** (Observer for South Africa) said that a preparatory meeting for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction had recently been held in South Africa. One problem experienced in the African region was that although many of the publications on disaster risks and risk reduction were available, they were too academic and there were no translations into local languages. Another was that the cost of training was very high. He would welcome examples of best practice in those areas, and also sought suggestions on how to use the mass media to disseminate information.

47. **Mr. Ustinov** (Russian Federation) said that strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance, and enhancing early warning and prevention systems, would stimulate the creation of an international network of rescue teams. It was also necessary to create mechanisms to exploit and coordinate national capacities to deal with disasters. It was important that enhanced international efforts should not detract from national capacities. The Secretariat should work to improve ways of financing humanitarian assistance through the donor community. Specialist suppliers of equipment should be utilized. His country, for example, specialized in rescue and transport equipment. It played an active part in the weather monitoring service of the World Meteorological Organization, notably in the exchange of meteorological data.

48. **Mr. Arrion** (ECHO), referring to the question raised by the representative of the United Kingdom,

said that the best way of mainstreaming disaster preparedness into long-term development programmes was through teamwork, not allowing any one person or department to formulate strategy. In ECHO, humanitarian operations were coordinated by a support group comprising representatives of the various operations involved, which met every month to plan and coordinate a joint strategy. It was also important to ensure sound policy leadership. The European Commission was fortunate in that regard, because the same Commissioner was responsible for both development and humanitarian operations. On the question of listening to victims, ECHO worked through the implementing agencies, the United Nations system agencies and non-governmental organizations at international, national and local levels, to find out which coping mechanisms existed on the ground. On the issue of local languages, national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies could play an instrumental role in translating rules, regulations and guidelines into local languages. The question of training costs was more difficult to answer. The World Conference on Disaster Reduction would provide a good opportunity to discuss it.

49. **Mr. Mohaghegh** (Operations Coordinator, IFRC), responding to the question put by the representative of Canada, explained that IFRC was an umbrella organization bringing together a huge network of national societies. Its role was to assist its member societies to promote the activities of volunteers and young people at the country level, and to share with them good practices learned from their sister societies and from the international community, Governments and the United Nations through operations in disaster situations.

50. The international community could do much to help in capacity-building: first, by recognizing the contribution of civil society groups, especially the Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers, to national planning and national disaster response; and secondly, by promoting the integration of disaster preparedness into national long-term development plans. It could also provide technical support to IFRC and to national societies for cooperation in disaster-related fields. Finally, given that the control of damage caused by disasters was beyond the capacity of affected countries, it could offer both financial and non-financial resources.

51. On the question of listening to beneficiaries and victims, he emphasized that the burden of loss suffered in a disaster was so great that everyone in the affected country could be regarded as a victim, and the listening should take place at both national and local levels. Local protagonists should be treated as equal partners in relief and rehabilitation. Local resources should be drawn upon in those efforts, and local cultures and languages must be respected.

52. As for the question of awareness raising, it was important to use the mass media, including radio and television, to promote disaster preparedness. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, special programmes run by the Ministries of Agriculture and Education, through 250 institutions of higher education and 15,000 schools, engaged the youth committees of the Red Crescent in disaster preparedness and training. Under an agreement with the Ministry of Education, teachers working in remote areas of the country helped to promote disaster preparedness in their communities. It was important to localize the concept of disaster preparedness as far as possible. In that sense, it was better to work at inculcating the concept than to import and translate printed materials.

53. **Mr. Frisch** (Chairman, INSARAG), replying to the representative of the United Kingdom, said that the search and rescue mandate came into play in the first moments after a disaster struck; INSARAG therefore had the opportunity to give immediate assistance in reconstruction and rehabilitation, and to promote disaster preparedness and prevention. In future, development cooperation agencies should focus more on actual risks and threats, and should carry out integrated risk analysis. Hazard and risk mapping was extremely important: for example, it was useless to talk about agricultural development in mountain areas, without allowing for avalanches and landslides caused by earthquakes and floods. Development cooperation and humanitarian aid in the same country should go hand in hand. Specialists deployed worldwide could build partnerships in the course of their work, and could build capacity for disaster preparedness and prevention, including training, in areas in which they had gained experience. There was currently a tendency for institutions lacking the necessary experience to offer training, a practice which should be curtailed.

54. On the question raised by the observer for South Africa, he said that INSARAG had recently established an outpost in Tunisia, financed by Germany and

Switzerland, which was translating disaster preparedness and response guidelines, initially into Arabic. Given extra resources, the translation and publication of such materials could be included in future development programmes.

55. **Ms. Taft** (Assistant Administrator, UNDP), replying to the representative of Canada, said that one of the challenges facing UNDP was that few of its country offices were investing in infrastructure, and it was very difficult to galvanize them into dealing with disaster-related issues. UNDP supported official relief programmes; however, many disasters, such as storm surges and earthquakes, had regional dimensions which its country offices were ill-equipped to tackle. The best time to promote natural disaster prevention and build capacity for risk reduction was immediately after a disaster had struck, when public attention was at its peak. Disaster preparedness and prevention must become part of the culture, including among children at school, in countries which were prone to disasters such as hurricanes or storm surges. UNDAC teams worked with Governments to remedy crises from a development perspective.

56. **Mr. Graisse** (Deputy Executive Director, WFP), referring to the question raised by the United Kingdom representative about a common United Nations response, said that the agencies in the system must, above all, plan ahead and work out together what should be done in countries at risk. At the same time, agencies must perform their own tasks well, otherwise coordination could not possibly succeed. The crisis in southern Africa was not only caused by drought; it was multifactorial, involving HIV/AIDS and other non-environmental causes. The response of the agencies must be broad enough to encompass them all.

57. **Mr. Egeland** (United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator), Moderator, summing up the discussion, noted that a number of speakers had emphasized the importance of national response capacity. Dealing with disasters was indeed primarily the responsibility of Governments. As pointed out in several General Assembly resolutions, international assistance was complementary to their efforts, its purpose being to foster national response mechanisms. The ability of the international community to assist in responding to disasters was better than ever before, thanks to improved tools. Sixty countries, as well as partner agencies such as IFRC and ECHO played a part in the UNDAC system. That augured well for future improved coordination with the donor community, and for the forthcoming World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

58. In the media and in the mindset of politicians in many Member States, however, the level of disaster awareness was too low. Response mechanisms in some countries, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, India and Bangladesh were improving, while other countries were lagging behind. In the southern Sahelian countries especially, the current crisis was deepening day by day, and the outside world was scarcely aware of its gravity. As had been pointed out, it was not enough to send in an UNDAC team when disaster hit. A collective effort was needed by the whole of the country team, and by all United Nations agencies, partners, donors and Governments at every level, to lift the affected countries out of crisis. It was to be hoped the ideas and suggestions made during the discussion would be translated into action at the field level.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.

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Humanitarian affairs segment

Provisional summary record of the 36th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 13 July 2004, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Penjo (Vice-President) ..... (Bhutan)

Contents

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*)

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

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In the absence of Ms. Rasi, Mr. Penjo, Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*) (A/59/86-E/2004/69 and A/59/93-E/2004/74)

Panel discussion on field-level coordination for the purpose of continuing the presence and operations of United Nations humanitarian assistance missions in higher-risk environments

1. **The President** welcomed the panellists and announced that Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, would serve as moderator.

2. **Mr. Egeland** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator), Moderator, said that the objective of the panel discussion was to examine how those involved in humanitarian activities could successfully address the unprecedented direct threats to their work in the field. In response to those threats, the United Nations had undertaken an extensive review of its security apparatus, which would be completed shortly. However, any action taken to implement the outcome of that review must strike a balance between two apparently contradictory imperatives, namely, the need for humanitarian workers to remain in high-risk environments in order to carry out their mandates and the need to take all necessary measures to protect those workers. In that connection, individuals working in the field were best placed to assess the level of risk, and increasing coordination between the different actors would strengthen risk-assessment capacities. In addition, closer collaboration must be pursued with host governments.

3. **Mr. Forster** (Vice-President, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)), Panellist, said that the complexity of current day crises, the dimensions of needs and the varying numbers and types of actors present had all made coordination among humanitarian organizations indispensable. The approach of the International Committee of the Red Cross to coordination was motivated by its desire to share experiences and harmonize efforts in order to increase complementarity and avoid duplication. In planning its activities, ICRC recognized the need to enhance, through dialogue, its knowledge of the approaches, policies and activities of other humanitarian actors. However, while committed to coordinating its activities with such actors, ICRC was not accountable to them. It needed to preserve its independence and neutrality in order to be unequivocally accepted by all parties to a conflict and thereby fulfil its mandate.

4. In view of the recent decline in the global security situation, ICRC had been forced to re-examine and adapt its analyses, policies and approaches in the field. The causes and characteristics of modern conflict environments were extremely diverse, and the renewed polarization of the global fight against terrorism, which opposed a number of State actors and radical non-State actors, had led to the undermining of the humanitarian principles of independence and neutrality, as many believed that it was impossible not to take sides. The difficulty of gaining access to the groups carrying out attacks against humanitarians posed another crucial security and operational challenge, since ICRC believed that sustained dialogue with all actors in a conflict situation was an indispensable prerequisite for achieving the required level of acceptance. Furthermore, humanitarian organizations were often perceived as being associated with the broader political and military agenda of the West or as being instrumentalized by belligerents. Such perceptions were reinforced by the blurring of mandates between the political and the humanitarian and the overlapping roles and objectives of military and humanitarian activities.

5. In order to respond to those challenges, ICRC had adopted a number of steps and policy approaches. First, and above all, it was committed to reaffirming the vital need for strictly impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian action, which, in practical terms, meant that that action had to be strictly consent-based, needs-based and non-discriminatory. It must also be non-militarized, because employing military means to gain access to affected populations would make humanitarians themselves a target by creating the perception that they were associated with a particular party to the conflict.

6. In that connection, ICRC took the view that it had become vital to explain more effectively why the principles of neutrality and independence were of increased relevance to humanitarian action. In any conflict situation, parties tended to reject humanitarian

actors suspected of having ulterior political motives, and therefore ICRC could not subscribe to the concept of integrated approaches, since they would combine political, military, reconstruction and humanitarian tools. It insisted on the need to respect the identity, mandate and operational approach of each individual actor. Nevertheless, ICRC maintained an active dialogue with the military, not least because they were primarily responsible for enforcing international humanitarian law. Coordination with the military was often indispensable in conflict situations and some circumstances might demand the presence of a military unit. However, ICRC wanted to avoid the current blurring of lines that had resulted from the characterization of military "hearts and minds" campaigns as humanitarian efforts, since the integration of humanitarian responses into an overall military strategy with the ultimate goal of defeating an opponent ran counter to the fundamental concept of humanitarian action.

7. With regard to security policy, ICRC had a highly decentralized management culture. Risk assessments were made primarily in the field on the basis of specific indicators, and responsibility for security lay with operational managers. It was convinced that security was inextricably linked to local population's perception of the humanitarian organization and to individual behaviour. However, in view of the changed global environment, ICRC must integrate into its security management system mechanisms for raising awareness and levels of preparedness in respect of dangers that might develop beyond a specific geographical context yet still affect staff working therein. It also needed to find new and appropriate means of communicating with the various parties in given situations, particularly those that might misunderstand or reject its efforts. In the face of certain acute security threats, ICRC had been compelled to temporarily limit some of its field operations and adapt its working methods. Nevertheless, it was maintaining a reduced presence on the ground in order to concentrate on key operational areas, such as the protection of civilians and detainees and emergency health and relief.

8. In conclusion, he reiterated the commitment of ICRC to pursuing increased coordination with all humanitarian actors and, to that end, welcomed the ongoing debate at the inter-agency level. In the light of the organization's paramount concern for maintaining space for independent and neutral humanitarian action, its coordination with other actors on the ground would depend not only on the specificities of each situation but also on the policies, methods and objectives of those actors. Their attitudes towards the principles of neutrality and independence would set the parameters determining the nature and extent of such coordination, which could not be regulated by general frameworks or directives.

9. **Ms. Russler** (Deputy United Nations Security Coordinator), Panellist, said that United Nations staff had been working in high-risk areas for many years. However, whereas in the past they had been afforded protection by the United Nations flag, recently they themselves, as representatives of the Organization, had become the target of attacks. The bombing in Baghdad and a number of subsequent published threats directed against the United Nations and its leaders had radically changed the security paradigm: the current threat level far exceeded the capacity of the existing system, and passive protection measures coupled with movement restriction procedures and reliance on the assistance of host governments were no longer adequate. Further steps must be taken to manage risk and reduce threats without limiting the Organization's access to populations in need.

10. In order to fully understand the operational environment, threat and risk assessment procedures were required. Such procedures must go hand in hand with programme planning and be based on a sound methodology. Minimum operating security standards (MOSS), which should be tailored to the specific needs of individual operations, were also critical to good security management: no staff member should be expected to serve in the field without prior security training in order to minimize risk. Resources for that training should be incorporated into the regular budget. Furthermore, without effective contingency planning, United Nations humanitarian workers became prisoners of events. In that context, it was essential to assess whether the benefits of programmes in high-risk areas outweighed the human cost. Lastly, ways must be found of improving outsiders' perceptions of the Organization, since United Nations humanitarian activities were not always viewed as neutral.

11. In conclusion, she said that the new threats facing the United Nations could be catastrophic. It was no longer acceptable to push the limits of security planning, as had been done in the past. The Secretary-

General had stated that the Organization's primary responsibility lay with its staff and level-headed planning would go a long way towards ensuring their protection.

12. **Mr. Morris** (Special Adviser to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)), Panellist, said that 80 per cent of field staff from the Office of UNHCR were working in the deep field, which was particularly dangerous. Cross-border refugee movements were often accompanied by the movement of weapons and combatants, which posed a threat to national peace and security and to the security and safety of international humanitarian workers. Although all UNHCR activities were informed by the need to remain neutral and impartial, parties to the conflict did not always perceive their efforts as such. The return of refugees to their country of origin was regarded by some factions as contrary to their political interests, particularly when destabilization and human displacement were the very purposes of the conflict.

13. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1296 (2000), the safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian personnel to civilians in armed conflicts was of the utmost importance. UNHCR took the view that it had an obligation to come to the aid of affected populations and that all victims had the right to receive assistance. In that context, neutrality and impartiality were synonymous with independence and non-discrimination.

14. With regard to ensuring the security and safety of humanitarian staff, he noted that the bombing of United Nations headquarters in Baghdad had underlined the need to strike a balance between the humanitarian imperative and risk management. No absolute threat level existed: it was always dependent on the mandate of the mission in question and the resources available and, in that connection, UNHCR supported the concept of tailored responses to specific threats. A decentralized, "bottom-up" approach would also contribute to strengthening capacity at the field level and fostering better understanding among local populations of the work of the United Nations.

15. While it was necessary to improve the coherence of the United Nations system response to humanitarian crises by, inter alia, establishing a unified security management system incorporating a single chain of command, independence was critical to the humanitarian endeavour. Therefore, devolving authority to the field level would provide the scope to pursue a common objective in varying ways. As far as management accountability was concerned, apparent non-compliance with specific rules and procedures was often attributable to a lack of capacity at the field level. In order to rectify that situation, operational activities and security planning must be better integrated and field staff should be given training in threat and risk assessment. In that connection, Member States would recall that they had a responsibility to ensure that there were sufficient financial resources to implement MOSS.

16. **Mr. Gaylard** (United Nations Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia), Panellist, said that in any high-risk humanitarian relief operation, staff and managers must be well equipped and well informed in order to ensure safety and security in the field. They needed good vehicles and communications equipment, and had to be fully aware of what was happening around them if incidents, such as the kidnapping of a security officer in Somalia were to be avoided.

17. Turning to Somalia in particular, he described a situation of general and chronic insecurity. Although there were pockets of stability in the north and south of the country, militias operated everywhere and a gun-culture was pervasive. Militia groups sometimes served as public security forces in stable areas and were often in control in unstable areas. The need for humanitarian assistance and social services was acute. The only way the United Nations could function under such circumstances was to deal with everyone indiscriminately, from respectable elders and members of the administration to local warlords. Humanitarian access had to be carefully negotiated; once terms had been agreed upon, the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD) conducted a safety assessment. All staff were expected to observe MOSS.

18. Somalia had shown that it was indeed possible to conduct humanitarian assistance operations in high-risk environments. Special arrangements had to be made to protect staff, safeguard valuable equipment, keep lines of communication open and minimize risks. To that end, experts had been recruited from Uganda to train the special protection forces, which were composed of Somali nationals who would later become part of the police force. The training and use of Somali staff and organizations was emphasized, not only as a security measure but also to assist capacity-building and lay the

ground for the future. International presence in the field was kept to a minimum. Good coordination among all actors was essential, and agencies needed to be flexible and to respond swiftly.

19. More funds were urgently required. Donations were increasing, but only 25 per cent of the total consolidated appeals funding had been received.

20. **Mr. Berteling** (Observer for the Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, emphasized that staff safety depended upon the management, not the avoidance, of risk. The European Union supported integrated missions and offered its help to the United Nations in attempts to deal with new security threats. Member States had a shared responsibility to ensure that any misunderstanding as to the humanity, neutrality and impartiality of assistance would be avoided. In conclusion, he asked whether ICRC might not lose certain advantages by not participating in integrated missions.

21. **Mr. Kuechle** (Germany) said that his country was generally in favour of integrated missions, considering them the most efficient way of delivering aid. While he understood that ICRC did not participate in such missions, he was interested to know how that organization viewed them from an objective standpoint.

22. **Mr. Cumberbach Miguén** (Cuba) endorsed the position of ICRC with respect to integrated missions. Accordingly, he wished to know the opinion of panel on the acceptability of recently launched unilateral military operations, and requested information about their impact on humanitarian operations.

23. **Mr. Lindvall** (Sweden), referring to Somalia, expressed his support for the policy of speaking to any leaders holding sway over civilian populations, whatever their reputation, and asked whether the United Nations as a whole supported that policy. He asked when the report on the future of the United Nations security system would be ready and whether a substantive debate would be held on the question.

24. **Mr. Backström** (Finland) asked whether it was still the case that loss of life was greater among humanitarian workers than among peacekeepers. He requested statistics, if available, on workers injured as opposed to killed, as well the number of United Nations personnel at risk worldwide. He was interested to know what conclusions could be drawn from such statistics for the future of humanitarian work. Finally, he wished to know if there were sufficient resources to guarantee the delivery of security in high-risk areas.

25. **Mr. Shimamori** (Japan) noted that all the members of the panel had spoken of neutrality and impartiality. He wished to know if they were discussing those principles in relation to the way humanitarian aid organizations were perceived by outsiders or from a conceptual standpoint. More specifically, he wished to know whether the security measures applied to the United Nations and to its implementing partners were the same.

26. **Mr. Simancas** (Observer for Mexico) asked what the Member States and the principal organs of the United Nations, especially the Council, could do to support the safety and security of humanitarian personnel.

27. **Ms. Golberg** (Canada) asserted that the security of staff was the collective responsibility of Member States and stressed the need for political engagement in addressing impunity. Her Government supported the move to strengthen the unified security management system. When the functions of UNSECOORD were expanded, candidates' qualifications must be carefully considered so that the best people were hired. Integrated missions must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis; such a mission might be appropriate in one context but not another. When asked to take a decision on an integrated mission, Member States often did not know what guidance to give because they received conflicting advice from different parts of the system. She looked forward to the study to be conducted by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which would assist Member States in providing more consistent guidance. Further discussion was needed at the national and the international levels to achieve absolute clarity regarding the role of all actors in humanitarian operations. Finally, she requested more information regarding any strategies of the Red Cross Movement, the United Nations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) aimed at lessening the negative impact of media coverage on humanitarian activities.

28. **Ms. Russler** (Deputy United Nations Security Coordinator) in reply to the question from the representative of Sweden, said she believed that the report on the future of the security system would be

ready in time for consideration by the General Assembly at its next session. Beyond that, she had no information. She had no statistics immediately available to give to the representative of Finland. She understood that the higher death toll to which he had referred had been among civilian personnel, not just humanitarian workers. It would be difficult to attach numbers to personnel at risk; risk itself was unpredictable and could change abruptly, from day to day and from region to region.

29. She was very grateful to Member States for the support received but regretted that resources were insufficient. In reply to the observer for Mexico, she said that while impunity had not been a topic of the current discussion, it had been a cause for concern for many years: approximately 270 staff members had lost their lives since 1 January 1990, yet the perpetrators had been brought to justice in 22 instances only. Member States could play a very important role in tackling that problem. They could also ensure that security was taken into consideration, in financial as well as practical terms, in any mandate assigned to the United Nations. Agreeing with the representative of Canada with regard to the expansion of UNSECOORD, she requested assistance from Member States in finding highly qualified candidates to fill the posts.

30. **Mr. Forster** (Vice-President, International Committee of the Red Cross), Panellist, said that the goal of ICRC, like all humanitarian actors, was to gain access to victims of conflict by establishing a presence on the ground and to enforce the provisions of international humanitarian law. In order to achieve their aims, humanitarian actors must be known, understood and accepted by all parties. To avoid being seen as part of a wider agenda, humanitarian action must be independent and must be treated as isolated and distinct from other activities. Though certainly needed, other agendas, such as efforts to promote peace and reconciliation, would not be accepted by the parties to a conflict in the same way as humanitarian action, and ICRC therefore feared that the integrated approach could undermine the perceived neutrality of humanitarian operations.

31. While recognizing that there were no "one-size-fits-all" solutions in conflict situations, he took the view that a consistent, principled approach must be adopted and maintained. It was therefore difficult for ICRC to justify adopting one approach in one country, while adopting a different approach in another country. Consistency was all the more necessary in a world in which even groups with diverging interests communicated with each other in real time. To avoid creating misleading impressions about their motives, humanitarian organizations must keep their attitudes to communication open but also be careful not to take sides or make political comments.

32. **Mr. Morris** (Special Adviser to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), Panellist, said that, in view of the comments of delegations which feared that the Organization's use of integrated missions had brought it to a crossroads, it appeared that it was time for a neutral and impartial review of such missions. There was a complex relationship between the various domains of United Nations activity, including efforts to prevent conflict and efforts to address the needs of the victims of conflict. He believed that thought should be given to replacing the term "integrated", which caused problems by being imprecise and having negative connotations. He was also concerned at the implication that such missions placed more value on structure than on function, when, if anything, it was more accurate to describe them as "multifunction" than to describe them as "integrated". Any review of integrated missions should take care to avoid the risk of viewing United Nations peacekeeping operations as just another form of military undertaking or United Nations peace-building operations as just another form of political undertaking.

33. **Mr. Gaylard** (United Nations Resident Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia), Panellist, replying to questions, said that the concept of transparency, independence, neutrality and accountability was translated into action on the ground through a code of behaviour for staff. If correctly applied, that code of behaviour protected the rights of the recipients of assistance — in keeping with a rights-based approach — and protected the staff providing the assistance. On the question of the Organization's approach to relations with local leaders, he said that his own experience in Somalia, northern Iraq and the Sudan had confirmed that that approach did not vary from location to location.

34. **Mr. Dhakkar** (Observer for Somalia), addressing the principles of impartiality and neutrality of assistance, asked whether the Resident Coordinator for Somalia could specify what portion of humanitarian and development resources for Somalia had been allocated since 1991 to the north-west of Somalia, the

so-called Somaliland, to the north-east of Somalia, the so-called Puntland, and to the Sool and Sanaag regions. He also wondered whether there had been a review or evaluation during the same period to assess the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance and development assistance. He noted that the Resident Coordinator had not spoken at all of the Transitional National Government established by the Arta (Djibouti) process in 2000 after a 12-year period without a central government.

35. **Mr. Egeland** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator), Moderator, said that, according to his recollection, the Resident Coordinator had referred both to Somalia and to the Transitional National Government.

36. **Mr. Gaylard** (United Nations Resident/ Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia), Panellist, said that, although he could not supply precise figures, he could confirm that the north-west, which he had always been careful to refer to as the Somaliland region, had received the highest percentage of humanitarian and development assistance, with the Puntland region not far behind. Neither the United Nations nor the Transitional National Government had chosen that pattern of distribution: the explanation was rather that the central southern part of the country was very difficult to operate in. He felt sure that progress in the ongoing reconciliation process, in which the Transitional National Government was a very important partner, would enable the international community to re-engage in that area, particularly Mogadishu, which was destined to become the seat of the future federal Government.

37. The Sool and Sanaag regions, which abutted the Puntland and Somaliland regions, had been disputed for over a decade. The humanitarian situation there had become steadily worse in the previous four years, resulting in the loss of the livestock on which the pastoral population depended, and driving that population into the towns. They were receiving assistance from the local administration, the United Nations, ICRC and NGOs. In keeping with the usual principles of humanitarian assistance, the United Nations had maintained close contacts with the administrations of both Somaliland and Puntland to keep open its access to those in need, even though it was operating in an area actively disputed between those administrations. Although the efforts of the Organization, the Somali authorities and the international community had successfully brought short-term assistance with emergency water supplies and health care, the drought was continuing, and more assistance would be needed pending the next rains, which were due in six months.

38. As to distinctions between humanitarian assistance and development assistance, every country's situation was different. In the case of Somalia, the Organization tended to see the transition from humanitarian relief to rehabilitation to development not as a continuum, but as a package. Each assistance activity could therefore be seen as classifiable into any of those categories, depending on the context in which it was being viewed.

39. **Mr. Cumberbach Miguén** (Cuba) said that the panel had not yet answered his earlier question about the acceptability of recently launched unilateral military operations and their effect on humanitarian operations.

40. **Mr. Forster** (Vice-President, International Committee of the Red Cross), Panellist, apologized for having misunderstood the question of the representative of Cuba and said that he wished to emphasize two points. Firstly, ICRC never commented on the justification for any military intervention. It, and international humanitarian law, were concerned with how the law was observed in war rather than how the law was used to justify war. Secondly, in situations of conflict, ICRC examined the compliance with international humanitarian law of all the parties involved. In order to do so, it maintained a presence on the ground to monitor the situation of the individuals protected by that law, such as civilians and detainees, and also maintained a dialogue with the parties to the conflict to urge them to deal with any problems or violations.

41. **Mr. Cardoso** (Observer for Brazil) said that, in discussing high-risk environments, the debate had so far focused on security issues, but not on HIV/AIDS, which had been mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (E/2004/74) and which had a high prevalence in many areas with humanitarian workers. He wondered what could be done to improve the situation of persons living with HIV/AIDS in humanitarian crises and, more specifically, how field coordination

could be improved to ensure a comprehensive and combined response, including prevention, treatment and long-term care.

42. **Mr. Egeland** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator), Moderator, said that the panel debate at the preceding meeting had discussed the multidimensional catastrophe facing many — mostly African — countries, which must deal simultaneously with HIV/AIDS, a crisis of governance, natural disaster and internal strife. That required a multidimensional response in which the United Nations country team, representing all the United Nations agencies and led by the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, must work closely with NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, donors, neighbouring countries and whatever local, national and regional authorities existed on the ground.

43. **Mr. D'Antuono** (Italy), associating his delegation fully with the statement made on behalf of the European Union by the observer for the Netherlands, said that he wished to ask the Special Adviser to UNHCR to elaborate on the decentralization of decision-making and how that would affect staff security, and to ask the Deputy United Nations Security Coordinator her views on the same matter.

44. **Mr. Morris** (Special Adviser to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), Panellist, said that security for United Nations staff in the field must be handled in a balanced way. Although there were threats which could only be understood, analysed and dealt with at the global level, the best assessment of how to manage threats and risks was local and national, because accountability was improved by appropriate devolution of authority. Efforts must be made to render such devolved assessment more effective, however.

45. The United Nations and its agencies had much to learn from ICRC and NGOs, which drew less of a distinction between planning and implementation for operations and planning and implementation for the provision of security. The two fields must be better integrated.

46. **Ms. Russler** (Deputy United Nations Security Coordinator), Panellist, echoing the view expressed by Mr. Morris, said that the security management system of the United Nations was already highly decentralized. Risk assessments were performed by designated officials and security management teams at the field level; they made security recommendations to the Secretary-General. However, there was no question that the ability of individuals in the field to make such assessments must be improved with appropriate tools and training. There must also be a strong central source of policy and oversight, including an overview of global threats which might not be evident to teams on the ground.

47. **Mr. Egeland** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator), Moderator, summarizing the debate, said that it had focused the attention of the Council on the need to cope with threats to humanitarian staff, as the most exposed and vulnerable members of any international operation. They had become soft-skinned and high-yield targets for ruthless groups of attackers. In 2004, 38 such staff had been killed in Afghanistan alone, and both there and elsewhere the main victims had been locally recruited staff.

48. The help of Member States would be needed to restore the status of the emblems and symbols which had protected humanitarian workers in the past. The present discussions had illustrated how the arrival of new actors in the field — commercial, political, military and security — had blurred traditional roles because they performed work very similar to that of humanitarian workers.

49. Integrated missions had become part of United Nations policy and could be found in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, and soon probably also in the Sudan. The Organization and the humanitarian agencies and their partners were discussing the nature of that integration, which, as one panellist (Mr. Morris) had pointed out, might benefit from being renamed. Despite the disagreements over integrated missions, the international community was aware that simply bandaging the wound would not suffice: the purpose of integrated missions was to move beyond the emergency stage and to address the building of peace, security and good governance.

50. He agreed with the conclusion of the representative of Canada that the security of humanitarian workers was not merely a matter for managers of humanitarian operations or for UNSECOORD, it was a collective responsibility. Political organizations, religious and cultural movements and the media throughout the world must

be aware of the need to protect unarmed humanitarian staff, who often worked alone and often crossed frontlines in conflicts.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.

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Economic and Social Council

Provisional

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Humanitarian affairs segment

Provisional summary record of the 37th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 14 July 2004, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Penjo (Vice-President) ..... (Bhutan)

Contents

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*)

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04-42495 (E)

In the absence of Ms. Risa (Finland), Mr. Penjo (Bhutan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*) (A/59/93-E/2004/74, A/59/86-E/2004/69)

1. **Mr. Essel** (Ghana) said that natural disasters and human conflict disrupted lives, destroyed property and set back development. Unlike natural disasters, however, human conflicts were largely avoidable and their consequences could be managed so as to mitigate the hardships suffered by victims. It was therefore essential for the international community to take diplomatic initiatives and devise early warning mechanisms to pre-empt violent conflict, especially in developing countries, so as to preserve infrastructure and limited human and material resources. Recent conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire had brought untold hardships to the civilian population, and had disrupted state institutions, thus hindering progress towards regional economic integration. Ghana had been working assiduously through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and other international forums to help prevent conflicts in the West African subregion and elsewhere in Africa. There was still much to be done in West Africa to disarm and demobilize armed groups and to control the proliferation and cross-border trafficking of small arms. ECOWAS was working with United Nations agencies and other friendly countries on the delivery of humanitarian assistance and on planning a response to the transitional requirements of the countries concerned. In that context, he welcomed the contingency planning strategies devised by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

2. Ghana appreciated the emphasis being placed on strengthening national capacities for preparedness and response to natural disasters, and was maintaining its own capacity, which could be boosted with outside assistance if needed. It also welcomed the efforts to integrate gender concerns into humanitarian responses. Gender mainstreaming should be stepped up, in view of the unique vulnerability of women and children. Ghana supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to prevent and respond to incidents of abuse by civilian and military personnel working with the United Nations or its partners. As a major troop-contributing country, Ghana was conscious of the importance of the prevailing codes of conduct for military and police officers.

3. As HIV/AIDS continued to decimate societies already undermined by natural disasters and conflict, it was vital to include HIV/AIDS prevention and management strategies in humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian personnel should inform affected populations of the goals of their activities, and ensure that their behaviour conformed both to those goals and to local norms and practices. Funding for humanitarian activities was uneven, leaving some countries substantially underfinanced. His delegation hoped that that problem would be addressed through the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative.

4. His delegation appreciated the response of United Nations agencies, in partnership with ECOWAS, to West Africa's cross-border issues. The region was now in a critical phase of transition, from relief to recovery and development, which called for sustained action on repatriation, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

5. **Mr. Siv** (United States of America) emphasized the problem of access by aid workers to communities in need. Although the Islamic Republic of Iran, following the earthquake in Bam, had quickly opened its borders to relief agencies and supplies, including a team from the United States, in the Sudan the Government had for months delayed access to the Darfur region, which was currently experiencing the world's worst humanitarian crisis. People there were dying as the violence continued, and up to a million could die in the months to come from exposure, malnutrition and disease. The United States was committed to addressing both the root causes of the tragedy, and the immediate needs of the suffering people. Since February 2003, it had provided over US$ 150 million in relief assistance for the Sudan, and had deployed numerous relief personnel including a 13-person Disaster Assistance Response Team on the ground. His country sought to be a good donor, irrespective of political objectives and regardless of the media profile of the crisis in question.

6. The United States supported the core humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. The first priority must be humanitarian action; that response could not be compromised or delayed by efforts to achieve overall

coherence. At the same time, the United States expected United Nations agencies to act coherently. A collaborative approach was especially important in tackling the problem of internally displaced persons in Darfur.

7. The United States was dedicated to reducing the world's vulnerability to natural hazards. It strongly supported the International Strategy on Disaster Reduction, and encouraged Member States to attend the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005.

8. **Mr. Sinaga** (Indonesia) welcomed the increasing numbers of regional peacekeepers providing humanitarian support. Noting also the increased recruitment of private contractors to manage and distribute relief, and the involvement of armed forces in relief and reconstruction, he emphasized that ground rules were needed to govern the provision of assistance by such means, as well as relations between civilian and military personnel, and coordination. In view of the increasingly interrelated nature of humanitarian problems, a stronger and more coherent international response was needed to such challenges as food insecurity, HIV/AIDS and weakened governance. His delegation was gravely concerned that the number of refugees under the responsibility of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had risen to almost 10 million. He hoped all the agencies would work together to bring down the number of refugees and internally displaced persons.

9. Humanitarian operations must be conducted in strict compliance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. Humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country and with respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States. The affected State should play the primary role in coordinating relief efforts. Unless those principles were observed, humanitarian operations could be undermined and lives put at risk. Sensitivity to local cultures and conditions would be enhanced if overlap between international humanitarian efforts and those conducted by the Government and local community could be avoided. Member States should provide more resources for humanitarian assistance, without confusing it with peace or economic development.

10. **Mr. Lopez-Clemente** (Cuba) said that the frequent humanitarian crises in the modern world were taking place against a backdrop of inequality and growing threats to peace and development. In a unipolar international system where hegemony was exercised through the "preventive" use of armed force, Cuba reaffirmed the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality laid down in General Assembly resolution 46/182. The need to provide assistance to millions of people must not become a pretext for rewriting international law and for flouting the sovereignty of States in order to serve the interests of a small group of powerful countries. The "responsibility to protect" and "humanitarian intervention" did not advance peace and international security; they merely complicated inter-State relations. Only too often, the countries promoting that agenda ignored or were even complicit with violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. There were many documented cases of arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial executions, torture, sexual abuse and other cruel treatment of prisoners in the context of the so-called war on terror. It could hardly be expected that local populations would respond favourably to "humanitarian" operations performed by people who were responsible for unilateral aggression under false pretexts. Those considerations must be taken into account by those who advocated so-called "integrated missions". Humanitarian assistance must be independent, neutral and impartial and must not be linked in any way to military forces of occupation. The increasing use of mercenaries from private security companies was a further concern. The only guarantee that people in need could obtain the necessary assistance was strict compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and with international law.

11. Natural disasters tended to occur in the poorest countries, whose vulnerability was made worse by poverty and underdevelopment. Enhanced prevention, mitigation and preparation, as well as a prompt international response to requests from affected countries, were essential. He emphasized the importance of the transition from relief from development, and of providing humanitarian assistance in the most effective ways, in line with humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law.

12. **Mr. Shamaa** (Observer for Egypt) condemned the attacks against relief workers and United Nations relief personnel which had taken place over the past year; those acts were contrary to the rules of international law prohibiting war crimes. The

international community must provide sufficient funds for disaster relief. Humanitarian assistance should be available equally to all disaster victims, and its provision should not depend on how the media reflected particular situations. Victims should never be used as human shields. The rights of civilians must be protected, and violators of their rights must be held responsible by the international community. The Council and the General Assembly both had a duty to enunciate the principles governing humanitarian assistance and the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, as the Assembly had done in resolution 46/182. His country firmly supported current donor initiatives, and hoped for larger flows of financial assistance for disaster relief. The United Nations and its specialized agencies should help countries in the task of capacity-building, as well as in reconstruction and development. All humanitarian assistance should be neutral and impartial, and be provided with respect for State sovereignty and in conformity with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

13. The international community should intervene to meet the needs of the Palestinian people. Thousands of Palestinians had been killed in the occupied territories and the Golan; property, buildings and infrastructure had been destroyed. He hoped that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, acting in collaboration with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, would submit a report on the situation, and that a resolution would be adopted by the Council and the General Assembly to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance.

14. **Mr. Dauth** (Australia) noted with sadness the loss of a number of United Nations humanitarian workers in the line of duty during the previous year. The delivery of humanitarian assistance had become more difficult and dangerous. Australia was continuing to provide rapid and generous support for the victims of crises and disasters, both within its own region and worldwide. Its highest priority was the Asia and Pacific region, which was too often affected by disasters, and his delegation encouraged the United Nations to focus on the role it could play there. Useful lessons could be learned from the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, which was a coordinated regional effort to prevent conflict, respond to humanitarian needs and assist in post-conflict reconstruction.

15. Seven issues were especially important for Australia: security and access for humanitarian personnel through effective risk management; the protection of civilians in conflict situations; the integration of humanitarian assistance into broader United Nations missions, in collaboration with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; support for countries in transition, in which Australia was anxious to play a role; more effective responses to natural disasters, especially through the integration of disaster preparedness and mitigation measures into national development strategies; gender analysis and mainstreaming; recognizing the critical role played by women as agents of change and as peace builders; and strengthening the humanitarian coordinator system so that field operations could be made more effective. Australia would continue to work with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and with agencies within and outside the United Nations system in order to strengthen humanitarian policy and advocacy.

16. **Mr. Grunewald** (Namibia) said that his country was battling interrelated humanitarian problems, including income inequality, abject poverty and food shortages as a result of recurrent drought and floods, compounded by the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. All those factors undermined development gains and efforts to eradicate poverty. His delegation therefore shared the Secretary-General's view that HIV/AIDS intervention should be integrated into humanitarian planning and programming, including in vulnerability assessments, and should cut across humanitarian and development lines to focus on long-term solutions.

17. While he welcomed the progress made under the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, he was concerned that the number of countries requiring humanitarian assistance due to complex emergencies remained constant and that funding levels for humanitarian assistance remained uneven, leaving some countries substantially underfunded. The decline in humanitarian assistance channelled through the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) was also a real cause for concern. Accordingly, his delegation endorsed the call for an increase in unearmarked, predictable funding for relief assistance and believed that urgent action was needed to strengthen the coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance.

18. The importance of investing in and further developing national capacities for early disaster warning, preparedness and response, particularly in disaster-prone areas, could not be overemphasized. The efforts of the United Nations to identify practical ways for channelling resources in support of national and regional disaster management capacities should also be strengthened, as should efforts to integrate a gender perspective into the planning, programming and implementation of humanitarian activities. The objective should be to help move national agendas from relief and dependency towards recovery, self-reliance and sustainable development.

19. **Ms. Mills** (Jamaica) expressed concern over the uneven pattern of funding for humanitarian activities, noting that greater emphasis should be placed on equity in the distribution of such assistance. In that regard, the recommendation that donors should make available increased amounts of unearmarked, predictable funding for relief assistance, including in the transition phase, deserved special consideration, as did the suggestion that they should also explore means to fund all critical needs across sectors. The objective should be to identify durable solutions in addressing not only the effects of humanitarian emergencies but also their causes. Every effort should be made to ensure that the provision of funds, especially in the context of assessing post-conflict needs, did not impose additional conditionalities on recipient countries. Furthermore, such assistance should not be to the detriment of resources being made available for development activities, neither should it be used as a substitute for development assistance.

20. Promoting capacity-building at the local, national and regional levels was of paramount importance. To that end, international cooperation in support of the efforts of affected States in dealing with natural disasters and complex emergencies was critical. Assisting developing countries in their efforts to strengthen disaster preparedness and management capabilities as well as to develop early warning and prevention mechanisms was particularly important. Although the United Nations system was increasingly attempting to build capacity at the national, regional and global levels, programming had not been as extensive or wide-ranging as it should be, due in part to the comparatively low level of funding provided for capacity-building in disaster reduction and recovery.

21. Strengthening coordination and coherence within the United Nations system as well as with national partners was vital for the provision of humanitarian assistance. Jamaica's recent experience in providing assistance to Haitians seeking refuge in the country, following the eruption of violence in Haiti, bore testimony to that fact. However, great care must be taken to ensure that the coordination function, especially in the context of increased humanitarian actors, did not become the most important function of humanitarian efforts. In that regard, the blurred distinction between military and humanitarian operations and the lack of coordination with the broader humanitarian and development community raised several concerns as it compromised the perception of the neutrality of humanitarian assistance and could have implications for the safety and security of personnel on the ground. There was a need for further dialogue between States and humanitarian actors on the respective roles and complementarity among humanitarian, political and peacekeeping actors in response to crises. All personnel should be sensitive to national and local customs and traditions. The Secretary-General's recommendations would advance prospects for ensuring that the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, as well as full respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, remained the central pillars of the humanitarian assistance framework.

22. **Mr. Gouveia** (Mozambique) said that humanitarian assistance must be carried out within the framework of the guiding principles of General Assembly resolution 46/182, as well as other relevant decisions of the General Assembly and of the Council. Humanitarian assistance operations should be impartial and focus on empowering local communities, with international partners playing a supportive role. There was no doubt that in dealing with emergencies, national capacity should be capable of providing the first line of defence; priority should therefore be given to the development of national prevention, mitigation, preparedness and management capacities that could ultimately prove to be the most cost-effective.

23. In Mozambique the compounding effects of HIV/AIDS on cyclical natural disasters had significantly increased the vulnerability of the population that was still in need of humanitarian assistance, despite the positive gains made in recent years. Noting that HIV/AIDS was a growing threat to

sustainable development and that without an aggressive response to combat it 20 per cent of the agricultural labour force would be lost to the disease by 2020, with life expectancy dropping to 36 years by 2010, he said that humanitarian problems must be addressed in an integrated manner, covering a development dimension in addition to emergency relief. The issue of transition from relief to development was also of critical importance, since it could ensure an end to vulnerability and dependency on emergency aid and enable recipient countries to develop the necessary tools to cope with future disasters.

24. Complementarity between emergency relief and development activities continued to be of critical importance and must be central to any development cooperation strategy. In that regard, he hoped that the resolution on assistance to Mozambique to be tabled during the upcoming session of the General Assembly would not only focus on humanitarian assistance, but also reflect the main political, social and economic aspects of the country and constitute an instrument for the further mobilization of humanitarian and development assistance for Mozambique. He welcomed the critical role played by the country's development partners and hoped that Mozambique could count on their continued assistance to ensure that the political, economic and social gains made to date would be sustainable and irreversible.

25. **Mr. Musambachime** (Observer for Zambia) said that Africa was tackling some of the most complex humanitarian disasters, such as the crisis in the Darfur region of the Sudan while southern Africa, which was just emerging from a major crisis, remained vulnerable as HIV/AIDS, poverty and food shortages still needed considerable attention. Long-term needs must be addressed if another humanitarian crisis was to be averted.

26. While his delegation welcomed the initiatives by the United Nations system to enhance coordination with respect to a number of important issues, much still remained to be done in terms of policy, financial resources and field level operations. Not much coordination had been achieved with regard to gender issues; there should be increased reporting on the integration of gender perspectives in the planning, programming and implementation of humanitarian activities. Zambia deplored acts of sexual abuse and exploitation, especially in the context of peacekeeping and humanitarian relief operations, the result most probably of poor oversight in the area of operations. Accordingly, Member States and humanitarian and peacekeeping missions should work together to eliminate incidents of sexual abuse; his delegation supported the incorporation of the core principles enshrined in the Secretary-General's bulletin in the standards and codes of conduct for troops and police forces.

27. Greater coordination was also needed in the protection of civilians in armed conflict, a shared responsibility of all actors involved. The African Union had appointed a special representative for the protection of civilians in armed conflict, which should make it easier for the United Nations to coordinate its actions in that regard in Africa. While the refugee situation might be improving as a result of the repatriation exercise being carried out in many countries, the plight of internally displaced persons, estimated at 25 million, was still a source of great concern. Much more must be done in that regard to ensure that coordination extended from policy to actual operations.

28. Turning to capacity-building, he noted that developing countries needed increased support to build capacity for effective response to natural disasters. Capacity-building should also be extended to regional institutions that were helping Member States cope with natural disaster preparedness and response. In that regard, the long-term effects or consequences of those emergencies should also be factored into any given response.

29. While the Central Emergency Revolving Fund was an important financial tool for emergency response, it was insufficient to meet the needs of affected countries and regions. In that regard, it might be helpful for the Council to be provided with comprehensive information on the amounts of humanitarian funding system-wide, so that it could take informed decisions concerning the allocation and resource mobilization of the Fund. Noting that disasters required that funds should be sufficient, timely and readily accessible if lives were to be saved, he supported the recommendation to increase the emergency cash grant to US$ 100,000 per country within existing regular budget resources.

30. **Mr. Blanco Dominguez** (Observer for the Dominican Republic), noting that his country was highly vulnerable to natural disasters, which impeded

economic development and hampered poverty reduction efforts, said that, while his Government had established clearly defined national policies for preventing and mitigating natural disasters, social and economic pressures forced people to live in unstable regions and in inadequate housing, frustrating the risk prevention and mitigation efforts. The recent tragedy in the province of Independencia bore testimony to that situation. However, thanks to support from the national and international communities, emergency humanitarian assistance had been provided in a timely and efficient manner.

31. Developing countries urgently needed technological and scientific assistance from the developed countries to help them combat the harmful effects of natural disasters. While national Governments and relief agencies were primarily responsible for the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance, there was an urgent need to eliminate the bureaucratic barriers that nearly always delayed the multilateral humanitarian response.

32. He expressed concern over the lack of specific national capacity-building programmes and over the financial difficulties of the Office for the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs, which should set up and regulate regional and local agencies for the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance to complement the work of regional search-and-rescue groups. The main participants should be national and local governments, financing institutions and non-governmental and civil society organizations, which could mobilize, without conditionalities and political limitations, sufficient human resources and funds to respond promptly and in a transparent manner to the frequent emergency situations that occurred in developing countries. His delegation endorsed the recommendation to raise cash grant maximums to US$ 100,000. He appealed to the international community, traditional and non-traditional donors alike, to provide more untied aid to the specialized agencies.

33. **Mr. Rivas de Zubiria** (Colombia) said that the humanitarian work of the United Nations system and its partners should be carried out in strict compliance with international humanitarian law and the principles of neutrality, humanity and impartiality. Humanitarian assistance must never be politicized or rendered in a manner that aggravated the vulnerability of countries and their peoples. It could be offered only at the request of the recipient State, and with its consent, and it must not only appear neutral and impartial, but actually be so.

34. In Colombia, President Uribe's policy of democratic security had demonstrated that through the strengthening of the rule of law and of democratic institutions, the security of the population could be increased and solutions could be found to humanitarian challenges. Internal displacement had decreased by 48 per cent over the past year; however, that accomplishment had not been recognized in the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/93-E/2004/74). His Government remained committed to reducing internal displacement and was counting on the support of all Colombians, as well as the assistance of the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, donor countries and non-governmental organizations. It applied the guiding principles of guaranteeing the willingness, security and dignity of returning displaced populations, and following up after their return to ensure the sustainability of the process.

35. **Mr. Simancas** (Observer for Mexico) said that the guiding principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality which governed humanitarian assistance both at times of natural disaster and in complex emergencies should be combined with full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of the beneficiary State. It was also essential to guarantee free and unimpeded access to all persons in need of humanitarian assistance. States had the primary responsibility for initiating, organizing, coordinating and providing humanitarian assistance and facilitating the work of humanitarian organizations. At the same time, international cooperation to deal with natural disasters and complex emergencies needed to be strengthened, with a focus on prevention and on long-term development. Resources for humanitarian assistance must not be limited by political, economic, military or other considerations.

36. The United Nations should strike a careful balance between emergency assistance and prevention, and should work to improve early warning and preparedness. It should lead the international community in coordinating efforts to assist affected countries in line with the priorities set by the countries themselves, taking into account the most vulnerable sectors of society. In natural disasters, the United Nations should pay particular attention to developing and least developed countries.

37. Member States should strengthen their commitment to honour the principles and norms of international humanitarian law and fulfil their responsibility to take effective measures for preventing and eliminating threats to peace. Similarly, they should guarantee the safety and access of humanitarian personnel, who, in turn, must respect local laws, culture and customs. The increase in deliberate attacks against humanitarian personnel was alarming; Mexico had therefore supported the adoption of Security Council resolution 1502 (2003). The Council and the General Assembly must work to strengthen coordination and develop general principles and policies, on the basis of experience on the ground. The International Criminal Court could also play a fundamental role in putting an end to impunity, while strictly observing the principle of complementarity which gave priority to national jurisdictions.

38. **Mr. Mirafzal** (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his Government deeply appreciated the assistance provided by the international community to the survivors of the Bam earthquake. That disaster had demonstrated the importance of transparent and reliable communication and information management during emergency response to disasters. Public announcements of pledges and donations that were unlikely to materialize could create unfounded expectations among the affected population and discourage other potential local and international donors from providing support, and also cause confusion with regard to the registration of contributions and reporting at national and international levels.

39. With natural disasters and complex emergency situations mostly occurring in the developing countries, the operational activities of the United Nations system should become its actual development mission and mandate. The World Conference on Disaster Reduction would provide an opportunity to address the question of risk reduction with a view to promoting development activities in the framework of capacity-building.

40. The primary responsibility of protecting and assisting civilians lay with national Governments, and the international community had an important role in assisting their efforts. However, in cases where Governments lacked the institutions and structures to meet their responsibilities, or territories within a country were under factional domination, the international community should intervene and provide support. In such cases, the United Nations should be in charge of coordinating humanitarian assistance in accordance with international law and key humanitarian principles, and should provide support and protection and prevent confusion among humanitarian actors which could endanger the overall humanitarian operation. It was important to monitor the activities of the various humanitarian players and their personnel to ensure protection of vulnerable groups.

41. On the question of security in humanitarian actions, he said that external humanitarian assistance should be complementary to the existing local capacities; inappropriate external action posed a risk to the security of the population and the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance. Security was an issue not only for international staff but also for other humanitarian players such as beneficiaries, local staff, host Government staff and the corporate sector. For that reason, the causes of security risks must be identified and addressed at the individual, organizational and community levels. The measures taken must be based on an understanding of the impact on the local community and the commitment of the international humanitarian community, with due regard for the need for diversity.

42. **Mr. Sharma** (Observer for Nepal) stressed the importance of a comprehensive approach to humanitarian assistance, which was vital to finding reliable solutions to humanitarian problems. The focus must be on ensuring a seamless transition from relief to development in order to prevent and mitigate recurrent disasters. However, short-term emergencies should not divert the international community's attention and resources away from the long-term need to address issues of poverty, illiteracy, HIV/AIDS and discrimination, which compounded complex humanitarian emergencies.

43. The amount of resources allocated to humanitarian assistance was insufficient. Additional resources must be provided, but the United Nations also had an obligation to use available resources optimally. To that end, there must be strengthened coordination within the United Nations system and between the system and other humanitarian actors to avoid waste. Moreover, as the primary responsibility for responding to natural disasters rested with the affected countries, national capacity-building was vital. The United Nations must also focus on building

regional capacities, so that help would not be too far away in times of difficulty.

44. Within the United Nations system, efficiency should be sought through joint planning, information and analysis sharing and common procurement. High-profile complex emergencies should not detract attention from serious humanitarian situations elsewhere. There was a need for a holistic approach to facilitate a judicious division of attention and resources. Humanitarian assistance should not be used as a vehicle to undermine the territorial or political sovereignty of any country, no matter how rich or poor, large or small. Moreover, allegations of sexual abuse must be investigated by the Council, in conjunction with the competent bodies.

45. **Mr. Ainchil** (Argentina) expressed deep concern about the problems of limited access of humanitarian workers to populations in need, attacks against civilian populations and the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. While his delegation recognized the difficulties faced by humanitarian personnel in some conflicts, especially in the case of integrated missions or parallel humanitarian and military missions, it could not accept the existence of such difficulties as justification for attacks against such personnel.

46. The Council should devote more attention to the question of the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. As his delegation had indicated in the Security Council, no security consideration could take precedence over the primary obligation of all States to comply with the basic norms of international humanitarian law. The obligation to protect the civilian population also extended to other non-State actors who aspired to international legitimacy. Similarly, the war against terrorism must be waged in compliance with international human rights law.

47. Because of the magnitude and complexity of humanitarian emergencies, national efforts were often insufficient to meet the needs of affected populations; indifference to such emergencies could not be an option for the international community. His delegation fully endorsed the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/93-E/2004/74). Flexibility, coordination and communication were essential elements in the provision of humanitarian assistance. In order to achieve flexibility, broad mandates were required for humanitarian organizations and a generous interpretation of current legal instruments, as well as the availability of increased amounts of unearmarked funding for assistance. The Council's coordinating role in humanitarian affairs must be further strengthened, and the possibility considered of resuming the humanitarian segment of the substantive session later in the year if required. It was important to improve communication channels between the United Nations system and Member States; the convening of periodic briefings and open-ended consultations with all humanitarian actors would contribute to a better understanding of the needs on the ground.

48. **Mr. Israfilov** (Azerbaijan) said that the Council's discussion of the transition from relief to development had contributed to an enhanced understanding of how the United Nations and other humanitarian actors responded to the needs of States affected by armed conflict. The previous day's panel discussion could have been more productive had more time been allotted to interaction between the panellists and Council members; nevertheless, a number of recommendations and useful ideas had been presented, and he hoped that the Council would continue its consideration of the issue of transition in future substantive sessions. Azerbaijan was particularly pleased by the focus on local capacity-building in disaster-prone and affected areas, and encouraged the United Nations to further strengthen its efforts in developing risk and vulnerability assessment tools.

49. The most vivid indicator of the adequacy of international humanitarian response to needs of refugees and internally displaced persons was its impact on improving their living conditions. Despite considerable international response efforts, an alarmingly high number of affected persons still did not receive sufficient protection and assistance, and there was a strong need for concerted action by the international community. Azerbaijan was therefore encouraged by positive developments in a number of areas under the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, which he hoped would ensure that humanitarian assistance was provided in accordance with humanitarian principles and in proportion to the needs of affected countries, regardless of the protracted nature or political circumstances of the emergency situation.

50. **Mr. Graisse** (World Food Programme (WFP)) said that the WFP had been put to extraordinary tests in 2003, fighting hunger in a world beset by violent

conflict, terrorism, natural disasters and the unyielding pandemic of HIV/AIDS. The year had begun with unprecedented global needs, which had soon grown sharply. By the end of the year, WFP had delivered more than twice as much as in 2002, to more than 100 million persons in 81 countries. Even excluding the Iraq emergency, the largest operation ever undertaken by WFP, the volume of food moved was up by 35 per cent.

51. WFP believed that the coordination arrangements established by General Assembly resolution 46/182, including IASC and CAP, had proven that collaboration between diverse humanitarian actors was both possible and necessary for providing an effective response to crisis situations. In most food emergencies, there were other urgent needs in the areas of health, nutrition, water and sanitation, education, and agriculture, that were essential to ensuring that food aid made a maximum impact and could be phased out as soon as possible. Donors must continue their efforts to fund all critical needs across all sectors.

52. Coordination among humanitarian partners was an absolute necessity for meeting the needs of beneficiaries. WFP had been playing a leading role in support of humanitarian coordination by acting as the custodian for critical humanitarian common services, such as the United Nations Joint Logistics Centre. It also provided support to a variety of users through the WFP humanitarian air services. In 2003, nearly 150,000 passengers had been transported, along with more than 100,000 metric tons of cargo, in crisis areas. Another area of WFP involvement was the management of the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot, which had responsibility for the urgent dispatch of humanitarian relief items throughout the world.

53. **Mr. Dall'oglio** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)), said that IOM, which was a member of IASC, had become a specialist in a number of activities relevant to both emergency situations and transition phases. IOM supported the recommendations of the Secretary-General on strengthening the coordination of emergency assistance and, in that regard, believed that considerable efforts had been made over recent months to improve the combined capacities of humanitarian actors to provide a more timely, predictable and coordinated response to crises of internal displacement, starting with a more pro-active field level response.

54. In dealing with internal displacement, IASC had opted for an inter-agency "collaborative approach" as the most appropriate modality for the mobilization of a broad range of expertise. Under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator the commitment to the collaborative approach had gained momentum and a number of relevant tools to assist in its implementation had been developed. Coordination could be a challenging process, particularly for smaller operational agencies such as IOM but, with goodwill and a determined resolve to achieve tangible results, it could produce the comprehensive and multidisciplinary response that was required to appropriately tackle many complex emergencies, such as had arisen in Iraq and the Sudan.

55. A more robust security management system was clearly required under the current circumstances, yet humanitarian agencies could not operate under a "siege" mentality. It was to be hoped that the discussions on a new unified security system would take due account of the conditions necessary for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Similarly, the issue of resources available for security was a matter of serious concern since IOM and many of its partners were facing severe constraints in raising the additional resources to meet new security standards, in particular when those were core costs not covered by assessed contributions.

56. **Ms. Delargy** (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that although the number of international refugees appeared to have fallen in recent years, the plight of victims of armed conflict or natural disasters still required the urgent attention of the international community. The deterioration of security for humanitarian actors was extremely troubling, and ultimately meant that those in need of humanitarian support often lost access to such assistance. UNFPA was concerned about the impact of the mixing of humanitarian, political and military objectives, which had affected perceptions in many parts of the world regarding the role of the United Nations and the humanitarian agencies, and was prepared to participate in a serious consideration of that issue.

57. UNFPA supported the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to ensure that the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality remained a fundamental consideration in the design and implementation of United Nations integrated missions, recognizing that national and local contexts

varied, but that humanitarian space and neutrality must be protected in order to safely provide support to vulnerable populations. It also encouraged improved understanding and participation of local communities in all aspects of humanitarian and post-conflict programme planning to strengthen local ownership, consolidate peaceful collaboration among communities and to ensure that initiatives were appropriate and effective. It welcomed the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative and attempts by donors to improve the reliability and timeliness of their support for humanitarian needs, and it also endorsed, and pledged participation in, the initiatives for the development of common needs assessments within the consolidated appeals framework. UNFPA could make a valuable contribution in the collection and analysis of demographic data for the planning and implementation of humanitarian assistance in every sector.

58. With regard to peacekeeping missions, UNFPA wished to underscore the positive roles that mission staff, including military contingents, could play in the prevention of both HIV/AIDS and sexual exploitation, and in raising awareness of the importance of respect for gender equity and responsible conduct. The tragedy of conflict and displacement should not be compounded by the tragedy and burden of HIV/AIDS. Not only should the epidemic be considered in all aspects of humanitarian response, but it must also be a strong component of transition planning. It had been shown that post-conflict environments were most conducive to the epidemic, yet, even simple programmes to ensure safe blood supply, carry out universal precautions, and integrate prevention remained underresourced, despite the expansion of resources available to HIV/AIDS treatment globally.

59. As a member of IASC, the Fund had sought to ensure that the importance of reproductive health was recognized as an integral part of the United Nations humanitarian response, and to that end, had worked for a decade in the Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations on the development of assessment tools, guidelines, protocols and programmes. Preliminary findings of a decade-long evaluation of developments in the provision of basic reproductive health care had shown that there had been much progress in the area of care for refugees, but that the situation remained serious for internally displaced persons. Treatment for victims of sexual violence remained well below required levels. UNFPA hoped that the recent IASC initiative for the development of comprehensive guidelines for the prevention and treatment of sexual and gender-based violence in emergency settings would mobilize more attention and resources for urgently needed work in that area.

60. **Ms. Gebre-Egziabher** (United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)) said that the increasing occurrence of natural and man-made disasters often forced countries to postpone national development programmes and exacerbated already precarious social, economic and environmental conditions. Nowhere were natural hazards more significant than in the cities, towns and villages of the world, where factors such as inappropriate land use, poorly designed and constructed buildings and infrastructure, and an increasingly degraded environment put human settlements at risk. As the lead agency within the United Nations system for coordinating activities in the field of shelter and human settlements and the focal point for local authorities, UN-Habitat played a leading role in disaster mitigation and post-disaster rehabilitation.

61. The Disaster Management Programme had been created to marshal resources to provide national and local governments, civil society and the private sector with practical strategies for mitigating and recovering from conflicts and natural disasters. The Programme also raised awareness among decision makers and communities on mitigation methodologies and rehabilitation in shelter and human settlements, and bridged the gap between relief and development by combining the technical expertise, normative understanding and lessons learned through field operations. Within the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs, UN-Habitat had affirmed its view that humanitarian response could benefit from an understanding of long-term perspectives at the earliest stages of intervention. In the achievement of its stated objectives, the Programme provided a combination of long-term technical and normative support through ongoing partnerships within the United Nations system and all Habitat Agenda partners.

62. Drawing on its experience in a number of post-conflict and disaster-prone countries and regions, including recent work in Afghanistan, UN-Habitat was ready to support countries with challenges anywhere in the world. It was actively engaged with the United Nations and other international entities in the work of

the secretariat of the International Decade for Disaster Reduction, including taking a leading role in the Inter-Agency Task Force on urban risk, and the collection of disaster vulnerability assessment tools.

63. **Mr. Sermoneta** (Observer for Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Israel was surprised by certain allegations made by a previous speaker, especially since the speaker concerned represented a delegation that was involved in attempts to put the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians back on track. In that context, the blatant and inaccurate allegations against Israel were far from useful. His delegation failed to understand how the language used could contribute either to the progress of the peace process or to that particular Member State's role in it.

64. Israel shared the concern of the international community over the deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the region. Violence and terrorism, by their very nature, entailed hardships for civilian populations: Israeli and Palestinian civilians had both endured tremendous pain and suffering as a consequence of the upsurge in terrorism over the previous three years. Bringing that suffering to an end, and providing for the security and prosperity of all peoples in the region, were critical components of any successful peace initiative and therefore a prime objective of Israeli policy.

65. Israel had done its utmost to cooperate with international actors in an effort to facilitate their humanitarian work aimed at improving the living conditions of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Despite the unrelenting threat of terrorism that it confronted on a daily basis, Israel had consistently tried to permit the flow of people, goods and humanitarian assistance to the greatest extent possible. During 2003, there had been a notable increase in such cross-border movements.

66. While the Member State in question was well aware of the situation on the ground, its representative had not made even a token reference to the campaign of terrorism and indiscriminate violence facing Israelis daily, directed against innocent civilians, nor had he even alluded to the actions that Israel had taken to aid the Palestinians in their plight. Israel's efforts continued daily towards the goal of improving the situation. However, it was far easier to facilitate humanitarian aid without terror, which endangered not only Israeli soldiers and civilians, but also humanitarian workers and United Nations staff. Palestinian terrorists had consistently exploited any Israeli attempt to ease the conditions of the Palestinian people; they viewed measures to increase freedom of movement as opportunities to infiltrate Israeli cities, and used the immunity granted to medical and humanitarian vehicles to smuggle weapons and explosives, posing a threat not only to those they targeted, but also to those behind whom they hid.

67. Israel did not believe that the attention of the international community should be devoted solely to the welfare of Palestinian civilians in that conflict. Israeli citizens, including children suffering from terrorism, were no less deserving of concern. If the international community were serious about alleviating the humanitarian plight of the Palestinian people, the single most important thing it could do was to insist that the Palestinian leadership end its campaign of terror and incitement, as called for in the agreements signed and in the road map.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations E/2004/SR.38

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

21 September 2004

Original: English

Substantive session of 2004
Humanitarian affairs segment

Provisional summary record of the 38th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 14 July 2004, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Penjo (Vice-President) ..... (Bhutan)

Contents

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*)

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

04-42498 (E)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Penjo (Bhutan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Egeland** (Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) said that the work of humanitarians had become more difficult, intricate and unsafe. The agencies operating on the frontlines of humanitarian response — the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Population Fund, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the non-governmental organizations — must operate daily in what had become fragile and uncertain environments. The hard work and sacrifices of colleagues in the field had enabled the humanitarians' life-saving efforts to succeed.

2. The humanitarian community must broaden ownership and support for humanitarian activities. The United Nations system needed improved collaboration and dialogue with Member States. The offices and agencies operating on the ground must seek a more active role from regional organizations and better alliances with national and local non-governmental organizations and develop a more systematic basis for their engagement. He said that he would give particular attention to building partnerships with Islamic organizations in the coming months.

3. Natural disasters increasingly threatened the lives and livelihoods of those living in poor countries and could, in an instant, wipe out development gains that might have taken decades to achieve. The picture of the international community's ability to respond was mixed. On the one hand, the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group and the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Team had successfully developed fast and sophisticated international response networks. On the other hand, for slow-onset and recurring disasters, such as the multifaceted disasters in southern African countries, fielding an UNDAC team was not the solution. Such a complex and chronic problem required a cohesive and multifaceted response that needed to draw on all parts of the United Nations system and all humanitarian partners.

4. The international community must prioritize national capacity-building, recognize and utilize local resources and foster community response. Family, neighbours and communities had provided the first line of defence in the aftermath of the Bam earthquake. Impressive local disaster response teams in India, Nepal and Bangladesh were currently coping with monsoon flooding, heavy landslides and the human toll that they exacted.

5. The humanitarian community must build on the lessons learned at Bam and follow the example set by colleagues in South Asia by investing in preparedness and training for national, local and community groups so that countries were not caught unprepared when the next disaster struck. There was a need to think beyond disaster emergency management and spend more time planning and funding post-disaster transition. Neglecting the long-term recovery phase in the wake of a natural disaster was a lost opportunity to improve development practices and ultimately reduce risk. It had been suggested that recovery and risk reduction should be built into country development plans and legislation and the good humanitarian donorship principles extended to disasters long after the initial damage had been done.

6. The humanitarian community needed to identify its natural disaster assistance needs and map out how it translated aspirations into action. The 2004 edition of "Living with Risk: A Global Review of Disaster Reduction Initiatives" gave a hundred examples of how local communities had undertaken successful disaster prevention efforts.

7. Humanitarians had always worked in dangerous environments, but the threat of deliberate targeting of humanitarian workers in several countries had become more serious. They were becoming soft-skinned, high-yield targets and required much more than compliance with minimum operating security standards to guarantee their safety. There was a need to protect the principles necessary for humanitarian operations and to better distinguish the purpose of humanitarians from others doing similar work. As a group, humanitarian workers had reaffirmed the leading role of impartial civilian humanitarian organizations in implementing humanitarian assistance, but had also recognized that,

in some circumstances, they needed the support of military or civil defence assets to accomplish their goals. The humanitarian community must ensure, however, that such support was used in conformity with international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles in order to preserve its independence, to uphold its reputation and to protect its staff.

8. There had been discussions about the impact of integrated missions on humanitarian action. Such missions were already in place in many parts of the world, including Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. The Sudan would most likely also have such a mission. While such strategies might bring greater coherence, humanitarian mission principles and responsibilities must be identified and respected when such strategies were applied. There was a need for further study of the impact that integrated missions had on the acceptance by local populations of the humanitarian community and on the ability of humanitarian organizations to operate alongside a military presence.

9. Some of the ideas generated during Council discussions of transition issues over the years had been put into practice in 2004. During informal discussions on transition issues, representatives from the Liberian Government and United Nations country team in Liberia had described efforts to develop a transition strategy and implementation mechanism. After 10 years of conflict in Sierra Leone, the establishment of a national recovery strategy had resulted in the United Nations Transitional Appeal for Relief and Recovery in Sierra Leone in 2004. There was closer collaboration between the United Nations system and the World Bank on joint needs assessments and the piloting of new funding mechanisms that allowed donors to channel funds more easily to transition activities.

10. None of those processes, however, was perfect and there was still much to do. The humanitarian community must harmonize its planning and fund-raising tools, bring about more coherence in its needs assessments and match local ownership with local institution-building so that national actors could be involved from the beginning. There was a need to apply its transition planning and funding strategies to countries recovering from natural disasters.

11. The informal panel on gender had discussed not only the varying effects of conflict and disaster on men and women, boys and girls, but had also highlighted the important role that women played in all emergencies. Women were often the first to provide assistance and support in a natural disaster, as was the case with the mothers who pulled children from the rubble seconds after the Bam earthquake. Women continually contributed to conflict resolution and peace-building through initiatives such as the people-to-people peace movement run by women in the southern Sudan. Such stories were a reminder that it was time to take gender mainstreaming out of the planning and political arena and bring it into the real world. Designing humanitarian programmes and activities based on a proper analysis of gender must be automatic in order to meet humanitarian needs more effectively. Lives could not be saved unless gender was taken into consideration.

12. Many delegations had raised their voices against sexual violence in war and some had characterized it as a crime against humanity. The Secretary-General's bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse had been applauded, and many had called for action to extend the standards contained in the bulletin to uniformed personnel serving under the United Nations flag. It was encouraging to hear from the Governments of Ghana and Zambia, both major troop-contributing nations to United Nations peacekeeping operations, that they took such standards seriously and would continue to respect the prevailing codes for their own armed forces and police officers.

13. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had no intention of interfering in the affairs of Member States, but it must take care to safeguard its overall reputation by promoting standards for all of those working for and alongside the United Nations in times of crisis.

14. The humanitarian community must strengthen its ability to assist the high numbers of internally displaced persons and it accepted the challenge put forth by Member States to work towards greater coherence as a United Nations system, to implement successfully a collaborative approach to those who had been internally displaced and to ensure that the coordination of assistance to internally displaced persons was translated into tangible improvements on the ground.

The meeting rose at 3.35 p.m.

United Nations E/2004/SR.39

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

8 October 2004

Original: English

Substantive session of 2004
General segment

Provisional summary record of the 39th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 15 July 2004, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Koonjul (Vice-President) ..... (Mauritius)

Contents

Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

(a) Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development

(b) Review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010

Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B

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04-42720 (E)

In the absence of Ms. Risa (Finland), Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (A/59/98-E/2004/79, E/2004/52 and E/2004/71)

(a) Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development (A/59/92-E/2004/73, A/59/92/Add.1-E/2004/73/Add.1 and A/59/92/Add.2-E/2004/73/Add.2)

(b) Review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 (A/59/94-E/2004/77 and E/2004/54)

Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B (E/2004/71)

1. **The President** informed the Council that the Bureau had considered a letter from the Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), requesting that the CPC report should be considered at a later date, at a resumed session of the Council. The Bureau had decided to accede to that request.

2. **Mr. Chowdhury** (High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States) introduced the Secretary-General's second annual progress report on the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action (E/2004/77). Progress by the LDCs towards the Brussels goals was very varied; while some LDCs had made remarkable progress, in others a high population growth rate, continuing conflicts and natural disasters were an impediment, along with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which had hit LDCs particularly hard, especially those in Africa and Asia. Infection rates for malaria, too, were high.

3. With regard to undernourishment, no tangible change was to be noted, but significant progress has been made towards universal primary education and gender equality in that field and in literacy. In secondary and tertiary education, however, all LDCs lagged behind. On average, women's representation in Parliaments also remained low.

4. Agriculture ought to be an engine for growth and income-generation in the LDCs, yet production was declining and LDCs were being marginalized in agricultural trade, while agricultural support for them from OECD countries was falling. In spite of the high priority accorded to infrastructure development in the Brussels Programme, it remained rudimentary in most LDCs and particularly in landlocked ones, and the digital divide between the LDCs and developed countries was as great as ever.

5. While the opportunities for LDCs to export to developed countries remained severely limited, enhanced South-South cooperation was resulting in knowledge-sharing, technology transfers and expansion of trade between other developing countries and LDCs, where exports had more than doubled over the last decade. Recognition of the need for special treatment for LDCs and a resumption of the negotiations for the Global System of Trade Preferences (GSTP) among developing countries during UNCTAD XI had real potential for trade expansion for LDCs.

6. Most of the LDCs had adopted the policies advocated in the Brussels Programme, and many of the 23 African countries which had volunteered to join the ground-breaking Peer Review Mechanism were LDCs. The Office of the High Representative was preparing a compendium of best practices to showcase that effort. There were, however, still major impediments hampering the LDCs' development efforts. While it was their primary responsibility to implement the Programme at the national level, the report called for their development partners in the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and bilateral and multilateral donors to provide support to them in building human, institutional and technical capacity. The Office of the High Representative had undertaken various initiatives to mobilize support and put their concerns high on the global agenda through monitoring and follow-up within the framework of the Brussels Programme and through coordination at all levels, both within the United Nations system and outside it, using its own resources and those of such Secretariat mechanisms as the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs. An Inter-Agency Task Force was being considered to provide a more coherent approach to implementation of the Programme at the global level. At the regional and national levels, too, the Office of the High Representative was active, working for

advocacy and synergy. A workshop had been held in May for the National Focal Points from LDCs to strengthen their national capacity for follow-up and implementation, provide a forum for sharing experience and build the foundations for future cooperation.

7. Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Programme were a major challenge to the Office of the High Representative, because of the way in which some of the goals were formulated and because of an absence of data, which many LDCs lacked the capacity and infrastructure to collect. A suitable time had to be chosen for a midterm review, with the 2006 Council review process perhaps being adjusted appropriately for this purpose, and the Office would appreciate guidance in this respect.

8. **Mr. Civili** (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs) stated that, since the Millennium Summit and the Monterrey and Johannesburg meetings, development issues were at the forefront of the multilateral agenda, and that it was time to move from commitments to action. The Council had a key role to play in achieving a coordinated and coherent approach and General Assembly resolution 57/270 B provided a solid framework. In resolution 2003/6, the Council had requested an updated report from the Secretary-General, whose report (E/2004/71) not only provided information about which provisions of the General Assembly resolution had been implemented so far, but also made recommendations for the future.

9. Three aspects of the implementation of the General Assembly resolution were relevant to the work of the Council. The first was a thorough review of the cross-sectoral themes common to the outcomes of major conferences and summits, in order to promote an integrated and coordinated approach. At the current session, the themes of the high-level and coordination segments were linked, to the satisfaction of participants.

10. The second relevant aspect was the coordination and strengthening of the relationships between the functional commissions, the regional commissions, the organizations in the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and financial and trade institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the links between all of them, NGOs and the private sector. There was potential for closer links between the General Assembly, the Council and the functional commissions, on the one hand, and the governing bodies of the rest of the United Nations system, on the other, and also for stronger regional contributions to integrated follow-up for conferences, measures for which were proposed in the Secretary-General's report and which included improved cooperation with funds and programmes. It was also important to ensure that all relevant stakeholders continued to be involved in a systematic way, and to enhance the Council's interaction with financial and trade institutions.

11. The third aspect was the role of the Council both in follow-up to recent conferences, and in the preparations for the high-level meeting during the General Assembly session, where the Council should focus on how best to contribute not only in its own right, but also by harnessing the contributions of the functional and regional commissions and other bodies.

12. There were likewise three key elements to be taken into account for enhancing coherence in policy development at the intergovernmental level and in strengthening the links between policy development, programme formulation and operational implementation at both national and regional level. The first was the establishment of a framework for linkages between the Millennium Development Goals and the cross-cutting themes of United Nations conferences, to enable effective contributions to the review in 2005 and its follow-up. The second was the triennial comprehensive policy review which the General Assembly would undertake at its forthcoming session and for which the Council had prepared the ground during its operational segment the previous week. The Council should consider how the policy guidance developed by that review could best be fed back into the policy development work of the functional commissions and executive boards in the system, so that they could cross-fertilize and create new and fruitful synergies. The third was the need for the regional commissions to be involved in the processes so as to ensure a regional dimension, making their work a fully integrated part of the preparatory process for the 2005 follow-up.

13. **Mr. Davidse** (Observer for the Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, and Turkey), the stabilization and association process countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of

Macedonia) and, in addition, the EFTA countries (Liechtenstein and Norway), welcomed the statement by the High Representative and its emphasis on issues very relevant to LDCs and pointed out how important the coming year would be for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The ministerial segment should focus on conference follow-up and implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, while the coordination segment focused on how the United Nations system helped to achieve all these aims. Thus the substantive session of 2005 would contribute to the 2005 review, drawing attention to economic, social and sustainable development and human rights and refocusing the Council's agenda.

14. The discussion on a multi-year programme for the coordination segment was useful and fulfilled the mandate of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B. The Council and its functional commissions were playing an important role in conference follow-up, in several different ways: firstly, through the special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO discussing the follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus, which had stressed the financial aspects of the Millennium Development Goals. The second way was through the Commission on Sustainable Development, which in its follow-up to the Johannesburg meeting had identified challenges concerning water, sanitation and human settlements. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report, the Council could next year consider the lessons to be learned from the Commission's new approach, resulting in a concrete set of actions and a clearer understanding of the role of different actors at various levels. Other functional commissions should also consider how to reform their working methods in order to implement General Assembly resolution 57/270 B. The Commission on Population and Development at its most recent session had voiced its reaffirmation of the Cairo Programme of Action, fundamental in the view of the European Union to the development and human rights agendas, and adopted a resolution on the importance of follow-up to that Programme for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Statistical Commission had worked to develop indicators for the Millennium Development Goals, and the European Union would report more fully in 2005 on its contribution in that respect. All functional commissions would be expected to focus on the 2005 event as it drew closer, including the Commission on the Status of Women 10 years after the Beijing Platform for Action and the Commission on Social Development as it considered implementation of its Copenhagen agenda in 2005. Coordination between the boards of funds and programmes was also important for the follow-up to summits and conferences, and the efforts of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its High Level Committee on Programmes in that respect were highly appreciated. Thanks to all that work, the Council should be an important voice in 2005, sending a message of sustainable development, social justice and great expectations for the future.

15. **Mr. Rangel** (Observer for Mexico) reiterated his country's unequivocal commitment to the implementation of the agreements reached at the International Conference on Financing for Development and its firm support of the Council as an essential pillar of the follow-up mechanism of that Conference. He was pleased to note that the Monterrey spirit was reflected in the agendas of the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO and the United Nations system. It was particularly gratifying that civil society and the private sector had also been participating in the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. However, there was a need for the Council to conduct the current assessment in order to improve the Conference follow-up mechanism.

16. Internationally, Mexico had hosted a forum on the "Reinvention of Government" and a conference for the signing of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Nationally, it had enacted legislation such as the Federal Law on Transparency and Access to Governmental Public Information and a law guaranteeing access to the civil service on the basis of merit.

17. The integrated approach with which the development problems identified at Monterrey had been addressed must be fully respected and maintained. Breaking the impasse to the implementation of the Doha Agenda, particularly on such issues as agricultural subsidies and access for developing countries to the markets of industrialized nations, would be key to speeding up implementation of the Consensus. Reform of the international financial architecture required increased participation by developing countries in the decision-making processes of the international financial institutions. Even though the decline in official development assistance had not

been halted, it would be important to give renewed impetus to that means of development financing. The follow-up to Monterrey must focus on alliances for the implementation of the commitments made and the Council should help to define guidelines in the areas of assessment and review, identify problems and priorities, and promote innovative frameworks for cooperation.

18. For Mexico, the effective implementation by Member States of the commitments made in Monterrey were not only imperative but also the precondition for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The dialogue which the Council would be conducting with the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO in 2005 must focus on how the Monterrey Consensus could be translated into achievement of the Millennium Goals and other international social and economic development goals. Some thought would also have to be given to the date on which the General Assembly High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development should be held.

19. **Ms. Liu** Hua (China) said the review of financing for development showed that, on the whole, progress was still uneven and insufficient. In implementing the Monterrey Consensus, national governments should shoulder the primary responsibility of financing for development, exploring their own potential and building their own capacity. On the basis of ongoing reforms, countries should continue to accelerate market reform, improve management, revitalize enterprises and mobilize financial resources.

20. It was also necessary to improve and strengthen management at the global level and establish a fair, equitable and effective international financial framework and multilateral trading system. Coordination and cooperation among international economic institutions should be strengthened and the United Nations should play a leading role in that regard. A fair multilateral trading system was an important channel for the developing countries to use comparative advantages in order to mobilize financial resources and achieve economic and social development. All parties involved in the new round of WTO negotiations should learn from the Cancún conference and show determination and wisdom in balancing the concerns of different parties, giving special consideration to the needs of developing countries.

21. There was an urgent need for developed countries to fulfil their financing commitments so as to ensure the quality and quantity of development assistance. Efforts to increase ODA should be conducted in parallel with efforts to improve its efficiency. Donor and recipient countries should enjoy an equal partnership and work together on the basis of mutual respect.

22. As financing for development was an important channel for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, she recommended that, in establishing an evaluation framework for implementing those Goals, supervision of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus could also be conducted by various parties, while evaluation should be conducted primarily within the United Nations system. The comparative advantage in terms of data collection and statistics of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other international institutions could be used for comprehensive evaluation. China supported the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions in enhancing cooperation and coordination for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. In that regard, it was necessary to encourage full participation by governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations so as to achieve complementarity and mutual promotion.

23. It was her delegation's hope that a general plan of follow-up actions would be formulated for implementing the Monterrey Consensus, with highly functional programmes involving different phases and key areas, which could be evaluated. China supported the initiative from developing countries for the establishment of a special committee on financing for development with a view to enhancing effective implementation of the Monterrey Consensus by all parties.

24. Turning to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, she stressed that the international community was duty bound to provide support and assistance to those countries. ODA was of special significance in the economic development of least developed countries. She called on developed donor countries to increase the ratio of their ODA to GDP in order to achieve the targets set as soon as possible. Developed countries should cancel the debts of LDCs, especially the heavily indebted ones, so that they could use their limited resources for development. They should also encourage

their national enterprises to invest more in LDC economies and should implement the agreement for zero tariffs and quotas as soon as possible. Moreover, least developed countries should be provided with preferential access to markets so as to promote their integration into the multilateral trading system and enable them to benefit from multilateral negotiations.

25. **Mr. Al-Bader** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the issue of integrated and coordinated follow-up had been on the Council's agenda since 1995. The focus on cross-cutting thematic issues had helped in promoting the implementation of the outcomes of conferences and summits. However, the individual follow up for each conference should maintain its own identity. The high-level meeting to be held in 2005 should follow that approach.

26. The challenge for that meeting would be to ensure that the goals of the conferences and the Millennium Development Goals were pursued in a coherent and mutually reinforcing manner. The Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals could be achieved only through the provision of necessary means of implementation, including financial resources, transfer of technology and capacity-building for developing countries.

27. Bringing together the outcomes of the Johannesburg, Monterrey and Brussels conferences, as well as the Barbados Plan of Action and the outcomes of other United Nations conferences and summits, so as to ensure that their goals were achieved in a timely manner, entailed a broader system-wide coordination, particularly at the country level for the implementation of the development goals. The Group of 77 and China proposed that the item should be considered in the coordination segment instead of the general segment, starting from the substantive session of 2005. Furthermore, the agenda item dealing with the implementation of resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B should be merged with the item on system-wide coordination, as both dealt with the overall work of the United Nations system in the economic, social and related fields.

28. **Mr. Neil** (Jamaica), said that the Council should play an important role in following up major conferences and summits. It should not be merely a channel through which reports were fed, but should give substantive consideration to how to implement conference outcomes. The Council should also consider the possibility of creating specific machinery for monitoring the follow-up to conferences and summits.

29. In the Council's deliberations, the emphasis should be on monitoring the implementation of conference outcomes based on a results-oriented approach, rather than the current emphasis on analysis and process. Indeed, the Council should be able to assess how far the international community had gone in achieving and meeting internationally agreed goals and obligations.

30. While his delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General in document E/2004/71, it had some reservations with regard to the recommendation in paragraph 13, which it believed would detract from the results-oriented approach the Council should be taking. His delegation fully agreed with the recommendations in paragraphs 21 and 27, as it believed that the functional commissions should give the Council a good assessment of what they were doing with regard to implementation in order to facilitate a very informed comprehensive review in 2005. He also expressed very strong support for the recommendation in paragraph 57 and hoped that the document entitled "A fair globalization: creating opportunities for all" would be used specifically in that context, since it contributed a very valuable perspective on how the process of globalization was being implemented and how its impact on developing countries needed to be monitored. Referring to meetings with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), he said that they should lead to some kind of conclusions on which follow up could be undertaken and ongoing contacts established. The Bureau of the Council could be the mechanism for such ongoing contacts.

31. **Mr. Mahiga** (United Republic of Tanzania), noting that the Brussels Commitments were far behind schedule, said that the Brussels Programme of Action could not be implemented unless the international community built a fair globalization process which affirmatively included and accommodated the least developed countries and cushioned them against its adverse consequences. The economies of the least developed countries had particular structural constraints and vulnerabilities which required a combination of special remedial measures and policy

instruments to overcome them. A dynamic dialogue was needed among all partners and within the countries involved on such crucial issues as aid, trade, debt sustainability and levels of ODA, as well as financing the Millennium Development Goals and long-term requirements for economic investment.

32. While issues of good governance in all aspects at national and international levels were important, human and institutional capacity-building were pivotal requirements for successful implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action. His Government had put in place key institutions, systems and processes for democratic governance contained in the National Framework for Good Governance. It had also established a Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance, an Ethics Secretariat and a National Audit Office. The Tanzania Assistance Strategy was the national framework for aid coordination and effective management of external resources for the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy.

33. Least developed countries had shown a strong commitment to implementing the Brussels Programme of Action by establishing national focal points, which were working closely with the Office of the High Representative. At the national level, LDCs needed to continue and consolidate macroeconomic reforms to encourage economic growth and institutionalize good governance in all its aspects.

34. At the international level, problems requiring attention included external indebtedness, the attainment of agreed ODA targets, openness and transparency in decision-making in the international financial and trade institutions and the setting of measurable indicators to follow up implementation of all the Millennium Development Goals.

35. **Ms. Houngbedji** (Benin), speaking on behalf of the group of least developed countries, said that the annual review of progress in implementing the Brussels Programme of Action should be an effective tool for follow-up that would enable the least developed countries to assess their achievements, the difficulties and obstacles encountered and future prospects so that the Programme of Action would not suffer the same fate as the two previous programmes. The Council had requested, by its resolution 2003/17, a more analytical and results-focused report. However, the current report (E/2004/77) had not adopted the results-based quantifiable approach requested by the least developed countries, making it difficult to assess progress.

36. In regard to commitment 1 on fostering a people-centred policy framework, the report had merely noted how many LDCs had registered a growth rate of more than 3 per cent in 2003, without mentioning how those results had been achieved or what lessons other LDCs could learn from them. The group of least developed countries wanted the report to produce added value and not provide information that anyone could obtain by reading newspapers or surfing the Internet.

37. In regard to commitment 2 on good governance at national and international levels, she was pleased to note that a number of LDCs had been involved in various activities intended to achieve good governance, which was important not only for LDCs. Judging by the information provided in the report, however, the international community, in contrast to the LDCs, had apparently taken no steps to fulfil its commitments in that area.

38. In regard to commitment 3 on building human and institutional capacity, a sector-by-sector analysis would have given a clearer picture of the progress thus far achieved by LDCs with the commendable support of their development partners. She therefore hoped that precise figures would be provided in the future.

39. In regard to commitment 4 on building productive capacities to make globalization work for the LDCs, she commented on the absence of information in the report on the activities of LDCs and their development partners in major sectors such as technology, industry, agriculture and so on. Figures could easily have been obtained in order to give a global picture of the progress achieved. She welcomed, however, the recent publication of the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and the synopsis thereof contained in the annex to document A/59/98-E/2004/79.

40. In regard to commitment 5 on enhancing the role of trade in development, she reiterated that the report offered no adequate assessment of the wide range of measures adopted by the LDCs and their development partners with a view to fulfilling that commitment. She wished to thank those countries which had introduced initiatives and programmes aimed at improving market access opportunities for LDCs. It was again disappointing, however, that the report gave no indication of the results attained, which would have

served to gauge the impact of such measures on economic growth in the LDCs. Similarly, given the failure to provide a breakdown of the many activities carried out in fulfilment of commitment 6 on reducing vulnerability and protecting the environment, it was impossible to gain any clear idea of the progress achieved.

41. In regard to commitment 7 on mobilizing financial resources, it was also impossible to obtain an overall idea of the sums mobilized during the period covered by the report. She acknowledged with gratitude the efforts of those development partners which had exceeded the ODA target and thanked others, including United Nations funds and programmes, for their continuing support for LDCs.

42. In future, the annual report on implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 should describe the concrete results of measures adopted to that end and compare the commitments undertaken against the progress achieved. On behalf of the LDCs, she requested dissemination of the Brussels Programme of Action within the United Nations system with a view to its incorporation into United Nations programmes of work. She also suggested that negotiations could be conducted with bilateral and multilateral development partners in order to designate key sector leaders and subsequently mobilize the resources and technical assistance needed to implement the Brussels Programme of Action. A minimum annual programme of work should be established, together with a road map of activities. All LDCs should effectively participate in the next assessment of the progress achieved in implementing the Brussels Programme of Action. In that connection, she asked to what extent Assembly resolution 58/228 requesting United Nations financing for that participation had been implemented. In conclusion, she urged the Office of the High Representative to continue its efforts, in conjunction with all the relevant players, to fulfil its mandate.

43. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh), after concurring with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, highlighted the increasing marginalization of the world's poorest, whose numbers were projected almost to double by 2015 if current trends persisted. LDCs were striving to fulfil their part of the commitments under the Brussels Programme of Action; Bangladesh, for instance, had accomplished considerable progress in such areas as primary school enrolment, infant mortality reduction and decline in population growth. During the 1990s, malnutrition had fallen even faster than income poverty, the number of women microcredit borrowers had reached 12 million, GDP had increased by 60 per cent and per capita income had grown three times faster than average in the low-income countries. Such successes were attributable to a variety of factors, including a prudent mix of socio-economic strategies, sound macroeconomic management, pro-market policies and, most importantly, innovative home-grown ideas such as microcredit, informal education and social forestation. In the belief that development should come from within and be supported from without, Bangladesh had prepared an interim poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP), incorporating the commitments made at Brussels, in conjunction with all major stakeholders. Its social achievements, however, would be unsustainable without a commensurate level of economic development and the continuing reduction of income poverty was contingent on the external environment of aid, trade, debt and remittances.

44. Bangladesh was also taking a number of legal and other measures under paragraph 78 of the Brussels Programme of Action in order to create an enabling environment that provided the best context for domestic and international resource mobilization, although the effective implementation of such measures would be difficult without additional external resources. In order to mobilize domestic resources, it had increased its tax net and was also helped in its efforts by civil society and NGOs, particularly in the important area of microcredit. In the LDCs, aid played a crucial role in capacity-building. He therefore commended those partners which had exceeded the target for donating a portion of their GDP to the LDCs and hoped that their much-needed support would continue. Another effective means of assistance would be to channel foreign direct investments to the LDCs with a view to building domestic supply capacity. Resources would also be released by the cancellation of LDC debts, a grave problem which necessitated a comprehensive solution.

45. He supported the proposal concerning the role of the Council in monitoring implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and said that the results-oriented approach suggested by the Jamaican representative merited serious consideration. In conclusion, he said that the commitments made by the

international community must be honoured and assistance in capacity-building rendered in the interests of a better, more prosperous and peaceful future for all.

46. **Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) noted the Russian Federation's consistent support for a stronger United Nations presence in the economy of the modern world and the challenges it faced, as advocated at many United Nations conferences and summits over the previous decade. The Council had a key part to play in integrating and coordinating implementation of the outcomes of those meetings.

47. The format for the work of the Council, renewed in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B, was appropriate for a more active and effective organ and adequate to deal with the majority of the serious proposals on further strengthening the substantive role of the Council. Some of the proposals were already being implemented, for instance in discussions of the multi-year work programme for the coordination segment and a more effective structure for reports. The Russian Federation was grateful to the Secretary-General for his updated report on the role of the Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (E/2004/71), with its recommendations that contributed to the effective implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B and 57/270 B. He wondered, however, whether there really was a need to give "greater thematic coherence" to the substantive session by organizing all segments around a single theme, and whether that would not narrow the scope of the Council's work. It would not be easy to transform the decisions of the high-level segment into substantive guidelines for various agencies in the space of only a few days, and it was also important to avoid the duplication of discussions at different segments.

48. The Russian Federation did not agree that the Council's annual policy dialogue with financial and trade institutions should focus exclusively on globalization, since the dialogue was the only forum at that level and it was important to maintain the broad and general format of the discussion. Increasing participation by NGOs and civil society was to be welcomed, as a sign of their greater real contribution to the implementation of United Nations goals and guidelines.

49. The Russian delegation supported enhancing the role of the functional commissions in monitoring implementation of the decisions taken at conferences, especially those that were global in scope. It supported the Secretary-General's recommendation in paragraph 27 for the functional commissions to identify more clearly issues that required a system-wide response and guidance from the Council to agencies and the idea of strengthening the links between subsidiary bodies and the Council itself in implementation of conference outcomes (para. 33). The regional commissions, too, had a part to play in taking cross-sectoral and multilateral dialogue to their level, and more active use could be made of the relevant subregional mechanisms.

50. The Russian Federation recognized the importance of increased cooperation between the Council and international financial and trade institutions. It would be worthwhile to consider the elaboration of a multi-year programme of meetings under the overall theme of cooperation in implementing the Monterrey Consensus, which could be organized by the President and Vice-Presidents of the Council.

51. **Ms. Nemroff** (United States of America) said that the creation of an enabling environment for economic growth was at the heart of the Monterrey Consensus and added that the report of the United Nations Commission on the Private Sector and Development was important to understanding the role of the private sector in creating sustainable economic growth. Enabling that sector to help the poor to prosper should be systematically integrated into development assistance efforts. To that end, the United States would be submitting a draft resolution on follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development that recommended that the Commission's recommendations should be broadly disseminated throughout the United Nations system. In regard to the desire expressed by some for increased monitoring of the internationally agreed development goals and the establishment of new mechanisms for that purpose, it was her delegation's view that a results-based approach at the country level would reveal much more about the progress towards those goals than an approach focused on input and statistics on that input.

52. **Ms. Ruder** (Observer for Switzerland) said that the Council had played an important role in initiating an integrated approach to the follow-up of summits and conferences by focusing on the common themes of

such events. Its role in supporting implementation of the internationally agreed development goals was also crucial, as was its role in ensuring a stronger link between policy guidance and implementation activities in the respective intergovernmental bodies. A cross-sectoral approach to reviewing progress in the implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences, as well as their follow-up processes, would enable the Council to focus its work and become a stronger partner. Further enhancement of the linkages between policy guidance and coordination, however, was still needed.

53. Bearing in mind the key role of the functional commissions in following up those outcomes, she welcomed the innovative steps taken by the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) to reform its working methods and thus create a cycle that promoted a true linkage between the expert and the policy level. She also welcomed the similar efforts of the Commission for Social Development; the efficiency of its work had consequently been enhanced by its panel discussions on emerging issues and its focus on questions relevant to the session in hand. She encouraged the functional commissions to exchange experiences, in which context she welcomed the recommendation in paragraph 22 of document E/2004/71.

54. In connection with the Council's role in monitoring implementation of the triennial comprehensive policy review, further thought should be given to the respective roles of the Council and the joint board meetings of United Nations funds and programmes. There was also scope for an increased exchange of experience between the latter and the functional commissions. She welcomed the recommendation to build thematic linkages into the agendas and work programmes of the governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations, an approach which would enhance the policy dialogue between the different bodies.

55. She agreed that the contribution of other stakeholders in the work of the Council injected dynamism into the intergovernmental process and was crucial to implementation of the internationally agreed development goals. Moreover, the Council had created a number of platforms aimed at enhancing dialogue with a variety of other institutions. In that context, she welcomed the annual special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO but felt that scope remained for further enhancing that dialogue and ensuring the continuity of such meetings. Lastly, she fully supported the theme proposed by the Secretary-General for the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly in 2005.

56. **Mr. Balarezo** (Observer for Peru) stressed that the Council, its subsidiary bodies and United Nations funds and programmes had a crucial contribution to make to the preparations for the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to be held in 2005. Within their respective areas of competence, they were in a position to identify the amount of progress achieved in implementing the internationally agreed development goals. As for the special high-level meeting to be held in 2005, attention should be focused on the Monterrey Consensus, with particular emphasis on the financing of the Millennium Development Goals. In that context, he highlighted the need for the Secretariat to contribute to the discussion and for the examination of issues at the intersection of the various chapters of the Monterrey Consensus in order to achieve a system-wide analysis. To that end, the work of the functional commissions was also important, although much remained to be done in developing assessment indicators of international commitments. In particular, those relating to the eighth Millennium Development Goal appeared to be insufficient.

57. Although the participation of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the spring session was a practice that should be encouraged, the first priority was to identify methods of successfully implementing the Monterrey Consensus. In that regard, the wider involvement of regional commissions and regional development banks was extremely important, as was the participation of the private sector, which played a substantial role in development. The possibility of working with the Global Compact should also be explored to enhance participation by the private sector in various thematic issues. The Council faced significant challenges in the coming year and its substantive session should therefore be devoted to a theme broad enough to give added value. Clearly, it was important to consider the input of the system to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

58. **Ms. Izata** (Observer for Angola) said that the main goal of the Brussels Programme of Action would be attained only if the least developed countries could count on the support of developed partners. Export-led growth was an important prerequisite for poverty

reduction and sustainable development, since most of them depended on commodity export revenue. Preferential market initiatives offered by the United States and other countries had remained underutilized because of such supply-side constraints as the lack of trade-related capacity, non-tariff barriers, rules of origin and product standards.

59. Further progress would not be achieved without renewed policy commitment by developed partners. The declining trend of ODA had worsened productive capacity, investment and trade conditions in the least developed countries, pushing their debt to unsustainable levels. As soon as was practicable, all developed countries should achieve and maintain the goal of contributing 0.20 per cent of their gross national product to the least developed countries. Everything should also be done to ensure that the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States could effectively and efficiently carry out its mandate.

60. **Mr. Ikouebe** (Congo) said that many developing countries were calling for the international community to fulfil its commitments, as poverty increased and the gulf widened between the developed and developing nations, particularly those in Africa. The *World Economic Survey 2004* had indicated that the global recovery with growth averaging 3.5 per cent should trickle down to all regions. Paradoxically, the poverty level had remained high in the developing countries. Moreover, with lack of resources remaining a major handicap, the poorest countries in Africa, even if they were to achieve their expected growth targets, would not be able to attain the Millennium Development Goals. There was no better time to reaffirm the essential role of the Council in following up the recommendations of major international conferences. As indicated by the Secretary-General, the strengthening of coordination and substantive linkages among the Council, its subsidiary organs and the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes would be critical to the comprehensive monitoring of the implementation of every global consensus. The Council should use the current dialogue to define more precisely the role of each organ in the process and forge the synergy that would promote the integrated and coordinated review and refocusing of its work. The outcome of the spring meetings of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions should also be used to best advantage. The implementation of the Monterrey Consensus had become urgent at a time when most developing countries were suffering from the lack of investment capital, the decline of ODA inflows and the burden of debt.

61. For the Congo, investment and debt workout were the most pressing matters to be addressed in the quest to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Accordingly, national initiatives had been taken to combat graft and corruption, regulate public procurement, make the budgeting process transparent and build statistical and other capacities by involving the various partners and promoting sound resource allocation.

62. **Mr. Camara** (Guinea) said that the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action gave his country hope in its pursuit of national poverty-reduction strategies. He was grateful to all development partners for their commitment and appealed to all bilateral and multilateral donors to lighten the debt burden of the least developed countries. Donor support in building productive, human and institutional capacity would foster LDC ownership of the Programme of Action. Innovative review mechanisms should be instituted to appraise national and regional economic and social performance under the Programme and the contribution of the various development partners to poverty reduction. The United Nations system, particularly the Office of the High Representative, was to be commended for leading the effort to coordinate the implementation of the outcomes of global conferences devoted to economic and social development. His delegation endorsed the recommendations in the various reports and believed that the speedy implementation of the Programme of Action offered the best solution for the least developed, landlocked and small island developing countries to eradicate poverty and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

63. **Mr. Shimizu** (Japan) said that, in addressing the economic and social challenges facing mankind, the United Nations system needed to review its activities and maintain its relevance for the majority of its stakeholders or risk losing its sense of relevance and legitimacy. If the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summit meetings were to be realized, much would depend on the streamlining and rationalization of the activities of the Economic and Social Council. Better communication among Council

members, the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO and the advisory groups on Africa would need to be sustained. Better use should be made of the regional commissions; they had demonstrated, within existing resources, the quality of input they could provide and the practice should be extended to other Council activities. Similarly, interaction should be ensured between the functional commissions and subsidiary bodies. Thematic coherence was important to addressing broad issues in a coordinated and integrated manner that ensured budgetary discipline while keeping the energies of the international community focused on priority issues of the moment.

64. **Mr. Kommasith** (Observer for the Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that, in addition to providing a broad account of the extent to which the LDCs and their development partners had implemented the Brussels Programme of Action, the Secretary-General's report should include analytical assessments of the impact on local communities. In the main, his delegation shared the view that the primary responsibility for implementing the Programme of Action lay with the LDCs but the policy commitment they had demonstrated warranted genuine political, financial and moral support from their development partners.

65. His country had set up high-level structures for monitoring, coordinating and reporting on national implementation of the Programme of Action. Attaching great importance to that and the Millennium Development Goals, the Government had mainstreamed most of the goals and targets into the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy. To halve poverty by 2015 and to exit LDC status by 2020, his country needed to mobilize sufficient resources internally and externally to surmount the challenges it faced as a landlocked least developed country.

66. **Ms. Mammadova** (Azerbaijan) said that the Council had a crucial role to play in reviewing implementation and should promote wider and more effective interaction between its functional commissions and the governing bodies of United Nations funds and programmes with a view to ensuring that they drew on relevant policy guidance from the commissions. Increased interaction between the Council and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination would strengthen the policy guidance role of the Council and have positive effects on work in the field. Continuity and perseverance in the Council's work were essential for the follow-up process. Azerbaijan fully supported the Secretary-General's suggestions on the role of the Council and its subsidiary machinery in preparation for the 2005 high-level plenary.

67. **Mr. Penjo** (Bhutan) said that his country was encouraged by the efforts to follow up the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and to mainstream the Brussels Programme of Action within the programmes of various agencies. Much, however, remained to be done to fulfil the goals and commitments of the Brussels Programme. Capacity constraints posed a major challenge to the LDCs, as did impediments that could not be overcome without the financial and technical support of development partners. Of immediate consequence to the incidence of poverty in LDCs was their lack of resources for the delivery of essential social services. Bhutan continued to rely heavily on ODA for its development programmes. It also lacked a large domestic market and a strategic trading location to attract foreign direct investment and private external inflows. Among the main challenges were trade and transit constraints, limited private sector capacity and shortage of skilled manpower. While he agreed that the LDCs bore the primary responsibility for their own development, the role of bilateral and multilateral development partners in meeting resource gaps in a predictable and timely manner would be critical for the successful implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.

68. **Mr. Gouveia** (Mozambique) reiterated his country's support for the Brussels Programme of Action, noting that a focal point for national implementation had already been appointed. He urged all development partners to match the strong commitment of LDCs to pursue the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.

69. **Mr. Boehnke** (Managing Director, Common Fund for Commodities) said the Fund was an intergovernmental financial institution established under the auspices of UNCTAD. It cooperated with other multilateral organizations and civil society to support socio-economic development and to reduce poverty. The Fund focused on productivity and quality improvement, marketing, horizontal and vertical diversification, private sector support, price risk management, and assistance to the effective functioning of a liberalized global economy. Commodities remained the backbone of economies in a

large majority of developing countries, particularly LDCs, and more than 50 developing countries depended on three or fewer leading commodities for more than half of their export revenue. A decade-long decline in the terms of trade for commodities of export interest to developing countries, as well as sharp price fluctuations, had aggravated the situation. Long before the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the Fund had accorded priority to the situation of the least developed countries and continued to do so. Under its second Five-Year Plan 2003-2007 and as of June 2004, the Fund had approved a total of 190 projects, of which 127 were regular and 63 fast-track projects, at an overall cost of US$ 380.8 million.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.